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ZIWIG'S BALL.

CHRISTMAS BOOKS

BY

CHARLES DICKENS

A REPRINT OF THE FIRST EDITIONS,
WITH THE ILLUSTRATIONS, AND AN INTRODUCTION,
BIOGRAPHICAL AND BIBLIOGRAPHICAL, BY
CHARLES DICKENS THE YOUNGER

LONDON: MACMILLAN AND CO., LIMITED
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1905

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

	ARTIST.	ENGRAVER.	PAGE
FEZZIWIG'S BALL . .	*John Leech*	.....	*Front.*
LEY'S GHOST	*John Leech*	.....	13
ETTE	*John Leech*	.....	18
ETTE	*John Leech*	.....	33
OGE'S THIRD VISITOR . .	*John Leech*	.....	37
ETTE	*John Leech*	.....	53
LAST OF THE SPIRITS . .	*John Leech*	.....	66
ETTE	*John Leech*	.....	72

THE CHIMES.

TOWER OF THE CHIMES .	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*Becker*	76
SPIRIT OF THE CHIMES .	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*Becker*	77
DINNER ON THE STEPS .	*R. Doyle*	*Groves*	79
TTY VECK	*J. Leech*	*Linton*	82
ERMAN CUTE AND HIS FRIENDS	*J. Leech*	*Linton*	93
TTY AT HOME . . .	*R. Doyle*	*G. Dalziel*	101
JOSEPH BOWLEY'S . .	*J. Leech*	*Linton*	104
OLD CHURCH . . .	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*Gray*	118
TTY VECK AMONG THE BELLS	*R. Doyle*	*Linton*	120
FERN'S COTTAGE . .	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*Gray*	132
ARD AND MARGARET . .	*J. Leech*	*Linton*	134
ARET AND HER CHILD .	*R. Doyle*	*Linton*	139
NEW YEAR'S DANCE . .	*J. Leech*	*Linton*	155

THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.

	ARTIST	ENGRAVER	PA
FRONTISPIECE	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*Thompson*	1
TITLE	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*G. Dalziel*	1
CHIRP THE FIRST	*R. Doyle*	*G. Dalziel*	1
THE CARRIER'S CART	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	1
JOHN'S ARRIVAL	*J. Leech*	*E. Dalziel*	1
JOHN AND DOT	*J. Leech*	*Swain*	1
CHIRP THE SECOND	*R. Doyle*	*E. Dalziel*	1
CALEB AT WORK	*J. Leech*	*G. Dalziel*	1
BOXER	*E. Landseer, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	1
TILLY SLOWBOY	*J. Leech*	*Groves*	2
MRS. FIELDING'S LECTURE	*J. Leech*	*E. Dalziel*	2
CHIRP THE THIRD	*R. Doyle*	*T. Williams*	2
JOHN'S REVERIE	*J. Leech*	*Groves*	2
THE DANCE	*J. Leech*	*Swain*	2

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

FRONTISPIECE	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*Thompson*	2
TITLE	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*Thompson*	2
PART THE FIRST	*R. Doyle*	*G. Dalziel*	2
WAR	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	2
PEACE	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	2
THE PARTING BREAKFAST	*J. Leech*	*G. Dalziel*	2
PART THE SECOND	*R. Doyle*	*Green*	2
SNITCHEY AND CRAGGS	*J. Leech*	*E. Dalziel*	2
THE SECRET INTERVIEW	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	2
THE NIGHT OF THE RETURN	*J. Leech*	*E. Dalziel*	2
PART THE THIRD	*R. Doyle*	*E. Dalziel*	2
THE NUTMEG GRATER	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	3
THE SISTERS	*D. Maclise, R.A.*	*G. Dalziel*	3

THE HAUNTED MAN AND THE GHOST'S BARGAIN.

	ARTIST	ENGRAVER	PAGE
FRONTISPIECE	*J. Tenniel*	*Martin & Corbould*	324
TITLE	*J. Tenniel*	*Martin & Corbould*	325
ILLUSTRATED PAGE TO CHAP. I.	*J. Tenniel*	*Martin & Corbould*	327
THE LIGHTHOUSE . . .	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	330
TILLY AND THE OLD MAN . .	*F. Stone*	*Martin & Corbould*	336
SOLOMAN AND THE PHANTOM .	*J. Leech*	*Smith & Cheltnam*	342
SOLOMAN AND THE BOY . .	*J. Leech*	*Smith & Cheltnam*	349
THE TETTERBYS	*J. Leech*	*Smith & Cheltnam*	357
ILLUSTRATED DOUBLE PAGE TO CHAP. II.	*J. Tenniel*	*Martin & Corbould*	364-5
TILLY AND THE STUDENT . .	*F. Stone*	*Martin & Corbould*	370
THE EXTERIOR OF THE OLD COLLEGE	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	374
THE BOY BEFORE THE FIRE .	*J. Leech*	*Smith & Cheltnam*	385
ILLUSTRATED PAGE TO CHAP. III.	*J. Tenniel*	*Martin & Corbould*	388
PENNY AND MOLOCH . . .	*J. Leech*	*Smith & Cheltnam*	393
TILLY AND THE CHILDREN .	*F. Stone*	*Dalziel*	399
THE CHRISTMAS PARTY IN THE GREAT DINNER HALL	*C. Stanfield, R.A.*	*T. Williams*	412

INTRODUCTION.

1.—A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

This little book, which shares with *Pickwick* and *David Copperfield* the distinction of being the most universally popular of all the works of Charles Dickens, was the result of a remarkably rapid feat of composition. In the early part of October, 1843, the idea of the story first occurred to its author, who was then on a visit to Manchester, and before the end of November it was finished, having been written in such spare moments as were not taken up by the two numbers of *Martin Chuzzlewit* which were in hand during those two months. Written at such high pressure it produced a wonderful effect on its author. "Over which Christmas Carol," he wrote to Professor Felton on the 2d of January, 1844, "Charles Dickens wept, and laughed, and wept again, and excited himself in a most extraordinary manner in the composition; and thinking whereof he walked about the black streets of London, fifteen and twenty miles, many a night when all the sober folks had gone to bed. . . . To keep the Chuzzlewit going, and to do this little book the Carol in the odd times between two parts of it was, as you may suppose, pretty tight work. But when it was done I broke out like a madman. And if you could have seen me at a children's party at Macready's the other night, going down a country-dance with Mrs. M., you would have thought I was a country gentleman of independent property residing on a tip-top farm, with the wind blowing straight in my face every day." Again, in a letter to Sir Edward Lytton Bulwer of two or three weeks' later date, he described himself as having been "so closely occupied with my little Carol (the idea of which

had just occurred to me) that I never left home before t owls went out, and led quite a solitary life."

Just before Christmas, 1843, the little book, bearing d 1843,[1] was published by Messrs. Chapman and Hall, on co mission for the author, in one volume foolscap octavo of c hundred and sixty-six pages, with four coloured illustratio and four woodcuts by John Leech, at five shillings. It v described on the title-page as "A Christmas Carol, in pro being a ghost story of Christmas," and the preface, wh was dated December, 1843, ran as follows:—

> I have endeavoured in this Ghostly little book, to raise Ghost of an Idea, which shall not put my readers out of humo with themselves, with each other, with the season, or with May it haunt their houses pleasantly, and no one wish to lay it.
>
> Their faithful Friend and Servant,
>
> C. D.
>
> *December*, 1843.

There was no question as to the success of the book. most prodigious success—the greatest, I think, I have e achieved," Charles Dickens wrote to Macready; while in t letter to Professor Felton which has already been quoted said: "Its success is most prodigious. And by every post manner of strangers write all manner of letters to him"—t author—"about their homes and hearths, and how this sa Carol is read aloud there, and kept on a little shelf by itsel The first edition of six thousand was cleared off immediate the second and third editions were very rapidly disposed and by the end of 1844 fifteen thousand copies had be sold. As to the view which was taken of it by the m competent among the critics it will be enough to quote t following extract from a letter addressed to Charles Dicke by Lord Jeffrey: "You should be happy yourself, for y may be sure you have done more good by this little publi tion, fostered more kindly feelings, and prompted more positi acts of beneficence, than can be traced to all the pulpits a confessionals in Christendom since Christmas, 1842;" and t noble and generous tribute which was paid to the book and author by William Makepeace Thackeray (over the signatu

[1] Mr. James Cook's *Bibliography of Charles Dickens* says that the *Ca* was dated 1844, but this is a mistake.

A. T.—Michael Angelo Titmarsh) in *Fraser's Magazine* of ly, 1844:—

It is the work of the master of all the English humorists now ive; the young man who came and took his place calmly at the ad of the whole tribe, and who has kept it. Think of all e owe Mr. Dickens since those half dozen years, the store of ppy hours that he has made us pass, the kindly and pleasant mpanions whom he has introduced to us; the harmless laughter, generous wit, the frank, manly, human love which he has ught us to feel! Every month of those years brought us some od token from this delightful genius. His books may have lost art perhaps, but could we afford to wait? Since the days when *Spectator* was produced by a man of kindred mind and temper, at books have appeared that have taken so affectionate a hold of e English public as these? They have made millions of rich d poor happy; they might have been locked up for years, doubt-, and pruned here and there and improved (which I doubt), but ere would have been the reader's benefit all this time, while the thor was elaborating his performance? . . .

Who can listen to objections regarding such a book as this? seems to me a national benefit, and to every man or woman who ds it a personal kindness. The last two people I heard speak t were women; neither knew the other, or the author, and both d, by way of criticism, "God bless him." . . . As for Tiny m, there is a passage in the book regarding that young gentle- an about which a man should hardly venture to speak in print n public, any more than he would of any other affections of his vate heart. There is not a reader in England but that little ature will be a bond of union between the author and him; d he will say of Charles Dickens, as the women just now, "God ss him." . . . A Scotch philosopher, who nationally does not p Christmas day, on reading the book, sent out for a turkey, d asked two friends to dinner—this is a fact. . . . What a ing is this for a writer to be able to inspire, and what a reward reap!

It may be noted that at Thackeray's sale a presentation y of the *Carol*, "W. M. Thackeray from Charles Dickens," s bought for £25: 10s., it was understood on behalf of r Majesty the Queen.

But even the great success of the *Carol* was to be attended grievous disappointment. The expenses of the book had n on an extravagant scale—"want of judgment had been

shown in not adjusting the expenses of production with a mor equable regard to the selling price," Mr. Forster euphemistically says—and the profit on the sale of the first edition wa alarmingly less than had hopefully been calculated on. "Suc a night as I have passed!" Charles Dickens wrote to Mr Forster on the 10th of February, 1844, "I really believed should never get up again, until I had passed through all th horrors of a fever. I found the *Carol* accounts awaiting me and they were the cause of it. The first six thousand copie show a profit of £230. And the last four will yield as muc more. I had set my heart and soul upon a Thousand clear What a wonderful thing it is that such a great succes should occasion me such intolerable anxiety and disappoint ment!"

Eventually the sale of fifteen thousand copies, which wa reached before the end of the year, produced a profit o £726, but the result of the first disappointment, closely following as it did a soreness which had arisen in regard to a clause in the *Chuzzlewit* agreement, was that the connectio between Charles Dickens and Messrs. Chapman and Hall wa severed—except that, for some reason of which I have failed to find any explanation, the *Chimes* was published by them a the following Christmas.

Very many editions of the *Carol* have been published sinc the eight which were issued in the original form in 1844, and it may be noted for the benefit of would-be amateurs of firs editions that whereas the original title-page is generally coloured red and blue, some few copies have it in red and green—I have seen fine examples of each in the collection o Mr. Bruton of Gloucester. In 1873 Messrs. Chapman and Hall issued a post octavo reprint from the old stereo plate at five shillings, each page surrounded with a red rule to fil the larger paper, and this was preceded by a "Collected Edition" of all the Christmas books in 1869, in a demy octavo volume of four hundred and fifty-five pages with some of the original illustrations. Still earlier, in the first cheap edition, the Christmas stories were published together in a volume of two hundred and sixty-six pages, in cloth three shillings, with a new preface dated September, 1852. In the "Household Edition" they appeared as seventeenth in the series, with twenty-six illustrations by E. G. Dalziel, in a

book of two hundred pages, in paper one shilling and ninepence and in cloth half-a-crown.

The original manuscript of the *Carol* was given by Charles Dickens to Mr. Mitton, his old schoolfellow and solicitor, and, to quote Mr. W. R. Hughes' *Week's Tramp in Dickensland*, "was for sale in Birmingham a few years ago, and might have been purchased for two hundred and fifty guineas. It is now owned by Mr. Stuart M. Samuel, and has since been very beautifully produced in facsimile, with an introduction by my friend and fellow-tramp, Mr. F. G. Kitton." Mr. Hughes seems, however, not to be quite accurate on this point. Mr. Wright, of Paris, informs me that "Harvey, the bookseller of St. James's Street, bought the manuscript at Sotheby and Hodge's rooms on the 27th of May, 1875, for £55, and he resold it to Sir S. Samuel."

The *Carol* was pirated in more than one quarter, and led to proceedings in the Court of Chancery which caused Charles Dickens, although he was successful—with the trifling drawback of being unable to get any costs out of the defendants—almost as much vexation and disappointment as the accounts of the first edition brought to him. "I shall not easily forget the expense and anxiety, and horrible injustice of the *Carol* case," he wrote afterwards, when there was a question whether he ought not to take proceedings in another case, "wherein in asserting the plainest right on earth, I was really treated as if I were the robber instead of the robbed. . . . And I know of nothing that *could* come, even of a successful action, which would be worth the mental trouble and disturbance it would cost."

So late as 1869 one of these imitations was published under the title "Christmas Eve with the Spirits, or the Canon's Wanderings through Ways Unknown."

A peculiar interest, apart from purely literary considerations, attaches to the *Carol*. A reading of it, for the benefit of the new Midland Institute, in the Birmingham Town Hall, on the 27th of December, 1853, was the first of those platform appearances as an interpreter of his own books which were to play so important a part in Charles Dickens's later life.

Little adapted as the *Carol* would seem to be for dramatic representation, it found its way on to the stages both of the

Surrey Theatre and of the Adelphi, not much to the sat faction of Charles Dickens, who wrote regarding the lat performance: "I saw the *Carol* last night. Better th usual, and Wright seems to enjoy Bob Cratchit, but *hea breaking* to me. Oh heaven! if any forecast of *this* was ev in my mind. Yet O. Smith was drearily better than expected. It is a great comfort to have that kind of me underdone, and his face is quite perfect."

2.—THE CHIMES.

CHARLES DICKENS was living at Genoa, in the beautiful o Palazzo Peschiere, when the time came for the production a companion to the *Christmas Carol*. The general notion the story was in his mind for some time before he had ir vented the machinery by which it was to be told, or had hi upon a satisfactory title. Both were accidentally suggeste to him by the maddening effect which the sudden clashing ou of the bells of Genoa had upon him one October morning when he was endeavouring to set himself to work in earnest There was nothing done that morning, of course, but the tim was not really wasted, for a couple of days after he was abl to send to Mr. Forster a note containing only the words, "W have heard THE CHIMES at midnight, Master Shallow," an to go to work upon the book with tremendous energy immediately.

He had experienced at first no little difficulty in accom modating his working habits to his strange and new sur roundings. "Never did I stagger so upon a threshold before, he wrote. "I seem as if I had plucked myself out of m proper soil when I left Devonshire Terrace, and could tak root no more until I return to it;" and again, "I can't hel thinking of the boy in the school-class whose button was cu off by Walter Scott and his friends. Put me down a Waterloo Bridge at eight o'clock in the evening, with leav to roam about as long as I like, and I would come home, a you know, panting to go on. I am sadly strange as it is, an can't settle." But the strong purpose and definite aim whic he had in his mind soon overcame these troubles, and enable him to devote himself to his task in serious earnest.

For the *Chimes* was emphatically a story "with a purpose." In previous books Charles Dickens had already attacked the abuses, the cant, the hypocrisies, and the cruelties of our social systems, and was to do so many times in the future, but always—except, perhaps, in the case of *Hard Times*—incidentally as it were, and rather dealing with them as side issues than as being absolutely necessary to the working out of the story. But the social problems which are dealt with in the *Chimes*; the anger which the carrying out to their logical extremes of the cold-blooded doctrines of the most heartless form of political economy by the Bowleys and Filers and Cutes [1] aroused in their creator; the strenuous endeavour to strike a swashing blow for the inarticulate, toiling, suffering, almost hopeless masses; all these themselves make up the story in this case and dominate the whole book.

"In my mind's eye, Horatio," Charles Dickens wrote, "I like more and more my notion of making in this little book a great blow for the poor. Something powerful, I think I can do, but I want to be tender too, and cheerful; as like the *Carol* in that respect as may be, and as unlike it as such a thing can be." And again: "I am in regular ferocious excitement with the *Chimes* . . . and blaze away, wrathful and red-hot. . . . I am fierce to finish it in a spirit bearing some affinity to those of truth and mercy, and to shame the cruel and the canting." To Douglas Jerrold he wrote from Cremona, under date the 16th of October (which is probably a mistake for November) 1844: "I have tried to strike a blow upon that part of the brass countenance of wicked Cant, where such a compliment is sorely needed at this time, and I trust that the result of my training is at least the exhibition of a strong desire to make it a staggerer. If *you* should think at the end of the four rounds (there are no more) that the said Cant, in the language of *Bell's Life*, 'comes up piping,' I shall be very much the better for it." A letter to Macready of the 28th of November conveyed the same

[1] Alderman Cute was a portrait of Sir Peter Laurie, a well-known Alderman of the City of London, who had been making himself very conspicuous at about that time by his expressed determination to "put down" all manner of things, suicide included; and there would not have been much difficulty in finding prototypes of Sir Joseph Bowley and Mr. Filer.

predecessor, or as its successor of the following year. Lo
Jeffrey was perfectly justified in writing to Charles Dicken
"All the tribe of selfishness, and cowardice, and cant, w
hate you in their hearts and cavil when they can; w
accuse you of wicked exaggeration, and excitement to d
content, and what they pleasantly call disaffection! B
never mind. The good and the brave are with you and t
truth also." But even of Lord Jeffrey Charles Dickens had
write, "Filer sticks in his throat rather," and it is possib
that for the general public the powder was found to bear
rather undue proportion to the jam, and that they did n
altogether care about having so intensely earnest and seriou
a protest presented to them in such a form.

The original manuscript of the *Chimes* is at South Ke
sington.

The *Chimes* was dramatised by Mark Lemon and Gilbe
A. à Beckett, to the latter of whom it had been read b
Mr. Forster as soon as it was concluded; and the play wa
first performed at the Adelphi Theatre, on the 19th o
December, 1844, with a cast which included O. Smit
(an actor usually associated with "heavy villains") as Tob
Veck, Edward Wright as Alderman Cute, Paul Bedford as Si
Joseph Bowley, Miss Fortescue as Meg ("Meggie" in the boo
of the play), and Mrs. Frank Matthews as Mrs. Chicken
stalker.

Of the effect of the reading upon Mr. à Beckett Charle
Dickens wrote to his wife in the letter of the 2d of Decembe
which I have already mentioned: "Forster read it (fo
dramatic purposes) to à Beckett. He cried so much and s
painfully, that Forster didn't know whether to go on or stop
and he called next day to say that any expression of hi
feeling was beyond his power. But that he believed it an
felt it to be—I won't say what." A somewhat similar effec
to that produced on the dramatist was made upon the grea
tragedian of the day, for a postscript to the same letter says
"If you had seen Macready last night, undisguisedly sobbin
and crying on the sofa as I read, you would have felt, as
did, what a thing it is to have power."

3.—THE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.

THE history of the third of the Christmas books is uneventful enough, and nothing like the storm and stress of the *Chimes* period is to be found recorded in connection with the *Cricket on the Hearth* in Charles Dickens's Life or Letters. Indeed there is only one allusion to any difficulty connected with the story, and that is contained in a letter of the 31st of October, 1845, in which Charles Dickens announced that he was at a dead lock with the story, and described himself as being sick, bothered, and depressed, adding, "I never was in such bad writing cue as I am this week, in all my life." But even this was not fairly attributable to the *Cricket*, and arose principally, no doubt, from the fact that he was at that time engaged on the preparations for a very serious enterprise—the starting of the *Daily News*.

The first idea of the *Cricket* had reference to the weekly or monthly periodical which Charles Dickens always had in his mind, and which at that time he proposed to issue weekly, at three halfpence if possible. The notion was that it was to be "partly original, partly select; notices of books, notices of theatres, notices of all good things; notices of all bad ones; *Carol* philosophy, cheerful views, sharp anatomisation of humbug, jolly good temper; papers always in season, pat to the time of year; and a vein of glowing, hearty, generous, mirthful, beaming reference in everything to Home and Fireside;" and was to be called the *Cricket*, with the motto, "A cheerful creature that chirrups on the Hearth. *Natural History.*"

In further strong recommendation of the idea, he wrote to Mr. Forster thus:—

Now don't decide hastily till you've heard what I would do. I would come out, Sir, with a prospectus on the subject of the Cricket that should put everybody in a good temper, and make such a dash at people's fenders and armchairs as hasn't been made for many a long day. I could approach them in a different mode under this name, and in a more winning and immediate way than under any other. I would at once sit down upon their very hobs; and take a personal and confidential position with them which

itself and in the method of its telling, and there was so muc dialogue ready for transplanting and only requiring a litt subsequent pruning to render it fit for stage purposes, that is not surprising that more than one theatre should have pr duced a version of the *Cricket* before the book was many da old. The adapter of the piece which was produced at th City of London Theatre on the 7th of January, 184 modestly withheld his name—at least it is not printed on th "book of the play" which I have before me—that at th Adelphi, which was first played on the 31st of Decembe 1845, was by the industrious Edward Stirling. At th City of London the principal figure was Mrs. R. Honner, a actress much esteemed at the minor theatres in those day who played Dot; at the Adelphi the Dot was Mrs. Fitzwillian the John Peerybingle O. Smith, the Bertha Miss Woolga the Caleb Plummer a Mr. Lambert, the Spirit of the Cricke Miss Ellen Chaplin, and the Tilly Slowboy Edward Wrigh This was a fairly strong cast, but was far surpassed at th Lyceum in an excellent adaptation by Albert Smith, whe Sam Emery, who was always very strong in Dickens parts played John Peerybingle, and the admirable Robert Keele and his incomparable wife were the Caleb Plummer and th Dot. That the story has remained popular with play-goer even to the present day the numerous admirers of Mr J. L. Toole's Caleb Plummer, in an arrangement of Dio Boucicault's version, can testify.

4.—THE BATTLE OF LIFE

It was during Charles Dickens's residence at Rosemont, nea Lausanne in the year 1846, and while the early numbers o *Dombey and Son* were in progress, that the *Battle of Life* wa written. The difficulties which had been experienced befor in carrying on two stories at the same time speedily pre sented themselves again, and, this time, with the aggravatio that the two had to be practically opened together. "I ought to have considered before," Charles Dickens confessed "that I have never before really tried the opening of tw together—having always had one pretty far ahead when I

ve been driving a pair of them. I know it all now. The parent impossibility of getting each into its place, coupled th that craving for streets, so thoroughly put me off the ack, that up to Wednesday or Thursday last, I really con-mplated at times the total abandonment of the Christmas ok this year and the limitation of my labours to *Dombey d Son.*"

The "craving for streets" which had troubled Charles Dickens even in Genoa, where he "had two miles of streets at least, lighted at night to walk about in; and a great theatre to repair to, every night," became in the quiet outskirts of the little Swiss town, a very serious trouble. Streets he wanted, and numbers of figures. As he described it, it seemed as if they supplied something to his brain which it could not bear, when busy, to lose, and as if he could not get rid of the spectres of his imagination unless he could lose them in crowds. Their absence, he declared, made the toil of writing immense.

With these two difficulties in the way the *Battle of Life* had a hard struggle for its very existence, and although, after the letter I have quoted above, the despondent fit passed off for a time, and a good beginning was made, the lapse of a week brought all the trouble back again. On the 26th of September a letter was written to Mr. Forster which announced the possibility of there being, after all, no Christmas book, and which described the writer as being "sick, giddy, and capriciously despondent," and it really seemed as if the double work would prove absolutely impossible. But a short visit to Geneva brought about a considerable improvement in Charles Dickens's health, and consequently in his views about his work, and he went at the Christmas book with a determination to get it finished in time.

The task was a hard one, the difficulty of working out the story in such narrow limits being especially trying—"I was thoroughly wretched at having to use the idea for so short a story," Charles Dickens wrote afterwards to Sir Edward Bulwer Lytton—but it was accomplished by the middle of October. How great the effort had been may be judged by Charles Dickens's description of himself at about this time. "I really do not know what the story is worth," he wrote in the letter which enclosed the last slips. "I am so

floored: wanting sleep, and never having had my hea free from it for this month past;" and two days later h said, "I dreamed all last week that the *Battle of Life* was series of chambers impossible to get to rights or get out o through which I wandered drearily all night. On Saturda night I don't think I slept an hour. I was perpetuall roaming through the story. . . . The mental distress quit horrible."

On the 19th of December the book was published b Messrs. Bradbury and Evans, at five shillings, uniform wit its three Christmas predecessors, in a foolscap octavo volum of one hundred and seventy-five pages. It was described o the title-page as "a love story" and bore date 1846; ther was no preface, but there was a dedication in the followin terms:—

THIS

CHRISTMAS BOOK

IS CORDIALLY INSCRIBED TO MY ENGLISH FRIENDS

IN SWITZERLAND.

Twenty-three thousand copies of the book were dispose of on the first day, and the story, though admitted by th verdict of later years not to be one of the best of th Christmas series, achieved at the time very considerab success.

The original manuscript is in the fine collection of M William Wright of Paris.

A kind of parody on the *Battle of Life*, called "The Batt of London Life, or Boz and his Secretary; by Morna," wa published in 1849 by G. Pierce, 310 Strand. Its author wa a certain Captain Thomas O'Keefe, and its principal claim t notice is that it contains six illustrations drawn on stone b Mr. George Augustus Sala, who also furnished the design fo the back and front of the pink boards in which it was boun Mr. Dexter refers to the book in the following terms:—

This illustrated cover contained a number of caricatu portraits, amongst others those of the principal contributors *Punch*—Thackeray, Jerrold, Lemon, à Beckett. The frontispie is a portrait of Boz, sitting in his study. I have Cruikshank copy with his autograph (it was presented to him by the autho

which I bought at the sale of his books in 1878. I thought that the book was written by Mr. G. A. Sala, but on my writing to him he was kind enough to give me the author's name. It is a very scarce little book, and is now worth three pounds.

Another; which was published in the *Puppet Showman's Album*, illustrated by Gavarni; was entitled "The Battle won by the Wind, by Ch—s D*ck*ns, author of the Picnic Papers, Barnaby Fudge, etc."

Dramatic versions of the *Battle of Life* were provided at the Lyceum (on the 21st of December, 1846) by Albert Smith, and at the Surrey (in January, 1847) by the inevitable Edward Stirling. The production of the Lyceum play, which had the advantage of the admirable acting of Mr. and Mrs. Keeley as Britain and Clemency, was supervised by Charles Dickens, and the success of the play was considerable. Mr. F. G. Kitton records a French *pièce en trois actes, mêlée de chant. Par MM. Melesville et André de Goy*, founded on the *Battle of Life*, which was played for the first time at the Vaudeville Theatre, in Paris, under the title "La Battaille de la Vie," on the 3d of September, 1853; and some twenty years ago I was myself responsible for an adaptation of the book, which was produced under Mr. John Hollingshead's management at the Gaiety Theatre, with Mr. J. L. Toole as Britain and Miss Ellen Farren as Clemency.

5.—THE HAUNTED MAN AND THE GHOST'S BARGAIN.

BEFORE settling down to work on the *Battle of Life* Charles Dickens had a number of ideas floating through his mind, any one or other of which he was almost inclined to substitute for the notion on which he had at first decided. Among these was the germ of the *Haunted Man*, of which he wrote from Lausanne: "I have been dimly conceiving a very ghastly and wild idea, which I suppose I must now reserve for the next Christmas book."

In the September of the following year (1847) he sent to Mr. Forster from Broadstairs the first slips of the story, with the letter saying that it must be finished in a month if it was

to be done at all, as the work on *Dombey* was taking so muc time and required so much care. Then, a week later, I wrote again, setting forth all the difficulties of the positio and expressing serious doubts whether it would be wise to g on with it. "Your kind help is invoked," he said. "Wh do you think? Would there be any distinctly bad effect holding this idea over for another twelvemonth? Sayin nothing whatever till November; and then announcing in th *Dombey* that its occupation of my entire time prevents th continuance of the Christmas series until next year, when is proposed to be renewed. . . . If I had no *Dombey* I coul write and finish the story with the bloom on—but there the rub."

Mr. Forster's opinion coincided with what was evidentl Charles Dickens's own inclination, and a repetition of the di tressing overwork which was involved in the production the *Carol* simultaneously with *Chuzzlewit*, and of the *Battle Life* with *Dombey*, was happily avoided by the postponemen of the *Haunted Man* until the following year.

When the time came for the story to be written it gav no serious trouble, and was published by Messrs. Bradbur and Evans in due course, just before Christmas, 1848 (th date of which year it bore), in a volume of one hundred an eighty-eight pages, in the old foolscap octavo form, and a the old price of five shillings. The frontispiece and titl were engraved on wood after John Tenniel, and there wer fourteen woodcuts by Clarkson Stanfield, R.A., John Leech Frank Stone, A.R.A., and John Tenniel. There was neithe dedication nor preface.

A captious (and rude) critic wrote in the April number *Fraser's Magazine* for 1840: "We can hardly believe hi (Boz) implicitly when he tells us that the artists design *after* his hints. In fact, many of his sketches are little mo than catalogues of what we find in the pictures, done wi the minuteness of an appraiser." If by sketches this gentl man meant *Sketches by Boz*, as is probable, he stultified hi self entirely, as most of them were originally publish without illustrations at all; if he intended to suggest that is possible in a novel to "write up" to the artist exclusive he was even more absurd. I may quote here a couple extracts from letters to Frank Stone about the *Haunted Ma*

show how careful Charles Dickens was as to the illustrations to his books, and what elaborate "hints" he did give artists :—

The drawing of Milly on the chair is CHARMING. I cannot ll you how much the little composition and expression please me. o that by all means. I fear she must have a little cap on. There omething coming in the last part, about her having had a dead ild, which makes it yet more desirable than the existing text es that she should have that little matronly sign about her. nless the artist is obdurate indeed, and then he'll do as he likes. am delighted to hear that you have your eye on her in the udents' room. You will really, pictorially, make the little oman whom I love.

And again :—

Sir, there is a subject I have written to-day for the third part, at I think and hope will just suit you. Scene, Tetterby's. ime, morning. The power of bringing back people's memories of rrow, wrong, and trouble, has been given by the ghost to Milly, ough she don't know it herself. As she comes along the street, r. and Mrs. Tetterby recover themselves, and are mutually affec- onate again, and embrace, closing *rather* a good scene of quarrel d discontent. The moment they do so, Johnny (who has seen r in the distance and announced her before, from which moment ey begin to recover) cries "Here she is!" and she comes in, sur- unded by the little Tetterbys, the very spirit of morning, glad- ss, innocence, hope, love, domesticity, etc. etc. etc. etc. I would mit the illustration to her and the children, which will make a ness between it and your other illustrations, and give them all a aracter of their own. . . . NOTE.—There are six boy Tetterbys esent (young 'Dolphus is not there), including Johnny : and in ohnny's arms is Moloch, the baby, who is a girl.

The success of the book, which started with a subscription f twenty thousand, was as great as that of any of its pre- cessors in the series, but, notwithstanding this, it had no ccessor, and was the last of the "Christmas Books" of harles Dickens.

A burlesque on the *Haunted Man*, by Bret Harte, was blished in New York, in 1870, with the following title: The Haunted Man, by Ch—r—s D—ck—ns."

A very good play was made out of the *Haunted Man* by lark Lemon, and it had a great success at the Adelphi,

where it was first produced. Edward Wright and
Fitzwilliam were the Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby, and
Woolgar (afterwards Mrs. Alfred Mellon) a delightful M
and I well remember the strangely weird effect of the
cleverly-managed first appearance of O. Smith as the Gho

CHARLES DICKEN
THE YOUNGER.

A CHRISTMAS CAROL.

IN PROSE.

BEING

A Ghost Story of Christmas.

the pavement-stones to warm them. The City clocks had just gone three, but it was quite dark already: it had not light all day: and candles were flaring in the windows of the bouring offices, like ruddy smears upon the palpable brown The fog came pouring in at every chink and keyhole, and so dense without, that although the court was of the west, the houses opposite were mere phantoms. To see the cloud come drooping down, obscuring everything, one might thought that Nature lived hard by, and was brewing on a scale.

The door of Scrooge's counting-house was open that he might his eye upon his clerk, who in a dismal little cell beyond, a of tank, was copying letters. Scrooge had a very small fire, the clerk's fire was so very much smaller that it looked like coal. But he couldn't replenish it, for Scrooge kept the coal-in his own room; and so surely as the clerk came in with the el, the master predicted that it would be necessary for them art. Wherefore the clerk put on his white comforter, and to warm himself at the candle; in which effort, not being a of a strong imagination, he failed.

"A merry Christmas, uncle! God save you!" cried a cheerful e. It was the voice of Scrooge's nephew, who came upon him uickly that this was the first intimation he had of his approach.

"Bah!" said Scrooge, "Humbug!"

He had so heated himself with rapid walking in the fog and this nephew of Scrooge's, that he was all in a glow; his was ruddy and handsome; his eyes sparkled, and his breath ed again.

"Christmas a humbug, uncle!" said Scrooge's nephew. "You mean that, I am sure."

"I do," said Scrooge. "Merry Christmas! What right have to be merry? What reason have you to be merry? You're enough."

"Come, then," returned the nephew gaily. "What right have to be dismal? What reason have you to be morose? You're nough."

Scrooge having no better answer ready on the spur of the ent, said, "Bah!" again; and followed it up with "Humbug.'

"Don't be cross, uncle," said the nephew.

"What else can I be," returned the uncle, "when I live in a world of fools as this? Merry Christmas! Out upon Christmas! What's Christmas time to you but a time for bills without money; a time for finding yourself a year but not an hour richer; a time for balancing your books and

having every item in 'em through a round dozen of mo
presented dead against you? If I could work my will," s
Scrooge, indignantly, "every idiot who goes about with 'M
Christmas,' on his lips, should be boiled with his own pud
and buried with a stake of holly through his heart.
should!"

"Uncle!" pleaded the nephew.

"Nephew!" returned the uncle, sternly, "keep Christma
your own way, and let me keep it in mine."

"Keep it!" repeated Scrooge's nephew. "But you
keep it."

"Let me leave it alone, then," said Scrooge. "Much
may it do you! Much good it has ever done you!"

"There are many things from which I might have derived g
by which I have not profited, I dare say," returned the nephe
"Christmas among the rest. But I am sure I have alw
thought of Christmas time, when it has come round—apart
the veneration due to its sacred name and origin, if anyt
belonging to it can be apart from that—as a good time: a k
forgiving, charitable, pleasant time: the only time I know o
the long calendar of the year, when men and women seem by
consent to open their shut-up hearts freely, and to think of pe
below them as if they really were fellow-passengers to the gr
and not another race of creatures bound on other journeys.
therefore, uncle, though it has never put a scrap of gold or si
in my pocket, I believe that it *has* done me good, and *will* do
good; and I say, God bless it!"

The clerk in the Tank involuntarily applauded: becom
immediately sensible of the impropriety, he poked the fire,
extinguished the last frail spark for ever.

"Let me hear another sound from *you*," said Scrooge, "
you'll keep your Christmas by losing your situation. You're q
a powerful speaker, Sir," he added, turning to his nephew.
wonder you don't go into Parliament."

"Don't be angry, uncle. Come! Dine with us to-morrow

Scrooge said that he would see him——yes, indeed he
He went the whole length of the expression, and said that
would see him in that extremity first.

"But why?" cried Scrooge's nephew. "Why?"

"Why did you get married?" said Scrooge.

"Because I fell in love."

"Because you fell in love!" growled Scrooge, as if that
the only one thing in the world more ridiculous than a m
Christmas. "Good afternoon!"

"Nay, uncle, but you never came to see me before that ppened. Why give it as a reason for not coming now?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I want nothing from you; I ask nothing of you; why cannot be friends?"

"Good afternoon," said Scrooge.

"I am sorry, with all my heart, to find you so resolute. We re never had any quarrel, to which I have been a party. But have made the trial in homage to Christmas, and I'll keep Christmas humour to the last. So A Merry Christmas, cle!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

"And A Happy New Year!"

"Good afternoon!" said Scrooge.

His nephew left the room without an angry word, notwithnding. He stopped at the outer door to bestow the greetings the season on the clerk, who, cold as he was, was warmer than ooge; for he returned them cordially.

"There's another fellow," muttered Scrooge; who overheard n: "my clerk, with fifteen shillings a-week, and a wife and ily, talking about a merry Christmas. I'll retire to Bedlam."

This lunatic, in letting Scrooge's nephew out, had let two er people in. They were portly gentlemen, pleasant to behold, d now stood, with their hats off, in Scrooge's office. They had ks and papers in their hands, and bowed to him.

"Scrooge and Marley's, I believe," said one of the gentlemen, erring to his list. "Have I the pleasure of addressing Mr. ooge, or Mr. Marley?"

"Mr. Marley has been dead these seven years," Scrooge ied. "He died seven years ago, this very night."

"We have no doubt his liberality is well represented by his iving partner," said the gentleman, presenting his credentials.

It certainly was; for they had been two kindred spirits. At ominous word "liberality," Scrooge frowned, and shook his d, and handed the credentials back.

"At this festive season of the year, Mr. Scrooge," said the leman, taking up a pen, "it is more than usually desirable we should make some slight provision for the poor and titute, who suffer greatly at the present time. Many thousands in want of common necessaries; hundreds of thousands are in of common comforts, Sir."

"Are there no prisons?" asked Scrooge.

"Plenty of prisons," said the gentleman, laying down the pen n.

"And the Union workhouses?" demanded Scrooge. "
they still in operation?"

"They are. Still," returned the gentleman, "I wish I c
say they were not."

"The Treadmill and the Poor Law are in full vigour, the
said Scrooge.

"Both very busy, Sir."

"Oh! I was afraid, from what you said at first, that so
thing had occurred to stop them in their useful course,"
Scrooge. "I'm very glad to hear it."

"Under the impression that they scarcely furnish Chris
cheer of mind or body to the multitude," returned the gentlem
"a few of us are endeavouring to raise a fund to buy the P
some meat and drink, and means of warmth. We choose
time, because it is a time, of all others, when Want is keenly
and Abundance rejoices. What shall I put you down for?"

"Nothing!" Scrooge replied.

"You wish to be anonymous?"

"I wish to be left alone," said Scrooge. "Since you ask
what I wish, gentlemen, that is my answer. I don't make m
myself at Christmas, and I can't afford to make idle people me
I help to support the establishments I have mentioned: they
enough: and those who are badly off must go there."

"Many can't go there; and many would rather die."

"If they would rather die," said Scrooge, "they had better
it, and decrease the surplus population. Besides—excuse me
don't know that."

"But you might know it," observed the gentleman.

"It's not my business," Scrooge returned. "It's enough f
man to understand his own business, and not to interfere v
other people's. Mine occupies me constantly. Good aftern
gentlemen!"

Seeing clearly that it would be useless to pursue their pc
the gentlemen withdrew. Scrooge resumed his labours with
improved opinion of himself, and in a more facetious temper t
was usual with him.

Meanwhile the fog and darkness thickened so, that people
about with flaring links, proffering their services to go be
horses in carriages, and conduct them on their way. The anc
tower of a church, whose gruff old bell was always peeping
down at Scrooge out of a gothic window in the wall, bec
invisible, and struck the hours and quarters in the clouds, v
tremulous vibrations afterwards as if its teeth were chatterin
its frozen head up there. The cold became intense. In the n

reet at the corner of the court, some labourers were repairing e gas-pipes, and had lighted a great fire in a brazier, round hich a party of ragged men and boys were gathered: warming eir hands and winking their eyes before the blaze in rapture. he water-plug being left in solitude, its overflowings sullenly ngealed, and turned to misanthropic ice. The brightness of the ops where holly sprigs and berries crackled in the lamp heat of s windows, made pale faces ruddy as they passed. Poulterers' d grocers' trades became a splendid joke: a glorious pageant, ith which it was next to impossible to believe that such dull rinciples as bargain and sale had anything to do. The Lord ayor, in the stronghold of the mighty Mansion House, gave ders to his fifty cooks and butlers to keep Christmas as a Lord ayor's household should; and even the little tailor, whom he d fined five shillings on the previous Monday for being drunk and oodthirsty in the streets, stirred up to-morrow's pudding in his rret, while his lean wife and the baby sallied out to buy the beef.

Foggier yet, and colder! Piercing, searching, biting cold. If e good Saint Dunstan had but nipped the Evil Spirit's nose with touch of such weather as that, instead of using his familiar apons, then indeed he would have roared to lusty purpose. he owner of one scant young nose, gnawed and mumbled by the ngry cold as bones are gnawed by dogs, stooped down at crooge's keyhole to regale him with a Christmas carol: but at e first sound of

> "God bless you, merry gentleman!
> May nothing you dismay!"

crooge seized the ruler with such energy of action, that the nger fled in terror, leaving the keyhole to the fog and even more agenial frost.

At length the hour of shutting up the counting-house arrived. ith an ill-will Scrooge dismounted from his stool, and tacitly mitted the fact to the expectant clerk in the Tank, who instantly uffed his candle out, and put on his hat.

"You'll want all day to-morrow, I suppose?" said Scrooge.

"If quite convenient, Sir."

"It's not convenient," said Scrooge, "and it's not fair. If I s to stop half-a-crown for it, you'd think yourself ill-used, I'll be und?"

The clerk smiled faintly.

"And yet," said Scrooge, "you don't think *me* ill-used, when I y a day's wages for no work."

The clerk observed that it was only once a year.

"A poor excuse for picking a man's pocket every twenty-fif of December!" said Scrooge, buttoning his great-coat to the chi "But I suppose you must have the whole day. Be here all t earlier next morning!"

The clerk promised that he would; and Scrooge walked o with a growl. The office was closed in a twinkling, and the cler with the long ends of his white comforter dangling below h waist (for he boasted no great-coat), went down a slide on Cor hill, at the end of a lane of boys, twenty times, in honour of i being Christmas Eve, and then ran home to Camden Town as ha as he could pelt, to play at blindman's-buff.

Scrooge took his melancholy dinner in his usual melancho tavern; and having read all the newspapers, and beguiled the rest the evening with his banker's-book, went home to bed. He lived chambers which had once belonged to his deceased partner. Th were a gloomy suite of rooms, in a lowering pile of building up yard, where it had so little business to be, that one could scarce help fancying it must have run there when it was a young hou playing at hide-and-seek with other houses, and have forgotten t way out again. It was old enough now, and dreary enough, f nobody lived in it but Scrooge, the other rooms being all let o as offices. The yard was so dark that even Scrooge, who knew i every stone, was fain to grope with his hands. The fog and fro so hung about the black old gateway of the house, that it seem as if the Genius of the Weather sat in mournful meditation on t threshold.

Now, it is a fact, that there was nothing at all particular abo the knocker on the door, except that it was very large. It also a fact, that Scrooge had seen it, night and morning, duri his whole residence in that place; also that Scrooge had as litt of what is called fancy about him as any man in the City London, even including—which is a bold word—the corporatio aldermen, and livery. Let it also be borne in mind that Scroo had not bestowed one thought on Marley, since his last mention his seven-years' dead partner that afternoon. And then let a man explain to me, if he can, how it happened that Scroo having his key in the lock of the door, saw in the knocker, wit out its undergoing any intermediate process of change: not knocker, but Marley's face.

Marley's face. It was not in impenetrable shadow as the oth objects in the yard were, but had a dismal light about it, like bad lobster in a dark cellar. It was not angry or ferocious, b looked at Scrooge as Marley used to look: with ghostly spectacl turned up on its ghostly forehead. The hair was curiously stirre

lf by breath or hot air; and, though the eyes were wide open, ey were perfectly motionless. That, and its livid colour, made horrible; but its horror seemed to be in spite of the face and ond its control, rather than a part of its own expression.

As Scrooge looked fixedly at this phenomenon, it was a knocker ain.

To say that he was not startled, or that his blood was not sscious of a terrible sensation to which it had been a stranger from fancy, would be untrue. But he put his hand upon the key he d relinquished, turned it sturdily, walked in, and lighted his candle.

He *did* pause, with a moment's irresolution, before he shut e door; and he *did* look cautiously behind it first, as if he half-pected to be terrified with the sight of Marley's pigtail sticking t into the hall. But there was nothing on the back of the door, cept the screws and nuts that held the knocker on; so he said Pooh, pooh!" and closed it with a bang.

The sound resounded through the house like thunder. Every om above, and every cask in the wine-merchant's cellars below, peared to have a separate peal of echoes of its own. Scrooge s not a man to be frightened by echoes. He fastened the door, d walked across the hall, and up the stairs: slowly too: trim-ng his candle as he went.

You may talk vaguely about driving a coach-and-six up a good flight of stairs, or through a bad young Act of Parliament; I mean to say you might have got a hearse up that staircase, d taken it broadwise, with the splinter-bar towards the wall, and e door towards the balustrades: and done it easy. There was nty of width for that, and room to spare; which is perhaps the son why Scrooge thought he saw a locomotive hearse going on fore him in the gloom. Half-a-dozen gas-lamps out of the eet wouldn't have lighted the entry too well, so you may suppose t it was pretty dark with Scrooge's dip.

Up Scrooge went, not caring a button for that: darkness is ap, and Scrooge liked it. But before he shut his heavy door, walked through his rooms to see that all was right. He had t enough recollection of the face to desire to do that.

Sitting-room, bedroom, lumber-room. All as they should be. body under the table, nobody under the sofa; a small fire in grate; spoon and basin ready; and the little saucepan of el (Scrooge had a cold in his head) upon the hob. Nobody der the bed; nobody in the closet; nobody in his dressing-wn, which was hanging up in a suspicious attitude against the ll. Lumber-room as usual. Old fire-guard, old shoes, two sh-baskets, washing-stand on three legs, and a poker.

Quite satisfied, he closed his door, and locked himself in double-locked himself in, which was not his custom. Thus secur against surprise, he took off his cravat; put on his dressing-go and slippers, and his nightcap; and sat down before the fire take his gruel.

It was a very low fire indeed; nothing on such a bitter nigh He was obliged to sit close to it, and brood over it, before could extract the least sensation of warmth from such a handful fuel. The fireplace was an old one, built by some Dutch mercha long ago, and paved all round with quaint Dutch tiles, designed illustrate the Scriptures. There were Cains and Abels, Pharaoh daughters, Queens of Sheba, Angelic messengers descending throu the air on clouds like feather-beds, Abrahams, Belshazzars, Apost putting off to sea in butter-boats, hundreds of figures, to attract h thoughts; and yet that face of Marley, seven years dead, ca like the ancient Prophet's rod, and swallowed up the whole. each smooth tile had been a blank at first, with power to sha some picture on its surface from the disjointed fragments of h thoughts, there would have been a copy of old Marley's head every one.

"Humbug!" said Scrooge; and walked across the room.

After several turns, he sat down again. As he threw his he back in the chair, his glance happened to rest upon a bell, a disus bell, that hung in the room, and communicated for some purpo now forgotten with a chamber in the highest story of the buildi It was with great astonishment, and with a strange, inexplica dread, that as he looked, he saw this bell begin to swing. swung so softly in the outset that it scarcely made a sound; soon it rang out loudly, and so did every bell in the house.

This might have lasted half a minute, or a minute, but seemed an hour. The bells ceased as they had begun, togeth They were succeeded by a clanking noise, deep down below; a some person were dragging a heavy chain over the casks in wine-merchant's cellar. Scrooge then remembered to have he that ghosts in haunted houses were described as dragging chain

The cellar-door flew open with a booming sound, and then heard the noise much louder, on the floors below; then coming the stairs; then coming straight towards his door.

"It's humbug still!" said Scrooge. "I won't believe it."

His colour changed though, when, without a pause, it came through the heavy door, and passed into the room before his e Upon its coming in, the dying flame leaped up, as though it c "I know him! Marley's Ghost!" and fell again.

The same face: the very same. Marley in his pigtail, u

aistcoat, tights and boots; the tassels on the latter bristling, like
s pigtail, and his coat-skirts, and the hair upon his head. The
ain he drew was clasped about his middle. It was long, and
ound about him like a tail; and it was made (for Scrooge
bserved it closely) of cash-boxes, keys, padlocks, ledgers, deeds,

MARLEY'S GHOST.

nd heavy purses wrought in steel. His body was transparent;
o that Scrooge, observing him, and looking through his waistcoat,
ould see the two buttons on his coat behind.

Scrooge had often heard it said that Marley had no bowels, but
e had never believed it until now.

No, nor did he believe it even now. Though he looked the phe tom through and through, and saw it standing before him; thou he felt the chilling influence of its death-cold eyes; and mark the very texture of the folded kerchief bound about its head a chin, which wrapper he had not observed before: he was st incredulous, and fought against his senses.

"How now!" said Scrooge, caustic and cold as ever. "Wh do you want with me?"

"Much!"—Marley's voice, no doubt about it.

"Who are you?"

"Ask me who I *was*."

"Who *were* you then?" said Scrooge, raising his voice. "You particular—for a shade." He was going to say "*to* a shade," b substituted this, as more appropriate.

"In life I was your partner, Jacob Marley."

"Can you—can you sit down?" asked Scrooge, looking dou fully at him.

"I can."

"Do it then."

Scrooge asked the question, because he didn't know whethe ghost so transparent might find himself in a condition to take chair; and felt that in the event of its being impossible, it mig involve the necessity of an embarrassing explanation. But t Ghost sat down on the opposite side of the fireplace, as if he w quite used to it.

"You don't believe in me," observed the Ghost.

"I don't," said Scrooge.

"What evidence would you have of my reality beyond that your senses?"

"I don't know," said Scrooge.

"Why do you doubt your senses?"

"Because," said Scrooge, "a little thing affects them. A sli disorder of the stomach makes them cheats. You may be undigested bit of beef, a blot of mustard, a crumb of cheese fragment of an underdone potato. There's more of gravy than grave about you, whatever you are!"

Scrooge was not much in the habit of cracking jokes, nor he feel, in his heart, by any means waggish then. The truth that he tried to be smart, as a means of distracting his own att tion, and keeping down his terror; for the spectre's voice distur the very marrow in his bones.

To sit, staring at those fixed, glazed eyes, in silence fo moment, would play, Scrooge felt, the very deuce with h There was something very awful, too, in the spectre's being

led with an infernal atmosphere of its own. Scrooge could not l it himself, but this was clearly the case; for though the Ghost t perfectly motionless, its hair, and skirts, and tassels, were still itated as by the hot vapour from an oven.

"You see this toothpick?" said Scrooge, returning quickly to e charge, for the reason just assigned; and wishing, though it re only for a second, to divert the vision's stony gaze from mself.

"I do," replied the Ghost.

"You are not looking at it," said Scrooge.

"But I see it," said the Ghost, "notwithstanding."

"Well!" returned Scrooge. "I have but to swallow this, d be for the rest of my days persecuted by a legion of goblins, l of my own creation. Humbug, I tell you—humbug!"

At this the spirit raised a frightful cry, and shook its chain h such a dismal and appalling noise, that Scrooge held on tight his chair, to save himself from falling in a swoon. But how ch greater was his horror, when the phantom taking off the ndage round its head, as if it were too warm to wear indoors, lower jaw dropped down upon its breast!

Scrooge fell upon his knees, and clasped his hands before his e.

"Mercy!" he said. "Dreadful apparition, why do you trouble !"

"Man of the worldly mind!" replied the Ghost, "do you ieve in me or not?"

"I do," said Scrooge. "I must. But why do spirits walk earth, and why do they come to me?"

"It is required of every man," the Ghost returned, "that the it within him should walk abroad among his fellow-men, and el far and wide; and if that spirit goes not forth in life, it is demned to do so after death. It is doomed to wander through world—oh, woe is me!—and witness what it cannot share, might have shared on earth, and turned to happiness!"

Again the spectre raised a cry, and shook its chain, and wrung shadowy hands.

"You are fettered," said Scrooge, trembling. "Tell me why?"

"I wear the chain I forged in life," replied the Ghost. "I de it link by link, and yard by yard; I girded it on of my own will, and of my own free will I wore it. Is its pattern strange you?"

Scrooge trembled more and more.

"Or would you know," pursued the Ghost, "the weight and gth of the strong coil you bear yourself? It was full as heavy

and as long as this, seven Christmas Eves ago. You have labour on it, since. It is a ponderous chain!"

Scrooge glanced about him on the floor, in the expectation finding himself surrounded by some fifty or sixty fathoms of ir cable: but he could see nothing.

"Jacob," he said, imploringly. "Old Jacob Marley, tell m more. Speak comfort to me, Jacob."

"I have none to give," the Ghost replied. "It comes fro other regions, Ebenezer Scrooge, and is conveyed by other ministe to other kinds of men. Nor can I tell you what I would. very little more, is all permitted to me. I cannot rest, I cann stay, I cannot linger anywhere. My spirit never walked beyo our counting-house—mark me!—in life my spirit never roved b yond the narrow limits of our money-changing hole; and wea journeys lie before me!"

It was a habit with Scrooge, whenever he became thoughtf to put his hands in his breeches pockets. Pondering on what t Ghost had said, he did so now, but without lifting up his eyes, getting off his knees.

"You must have been very slow about it, Jacob," Scroo observed, in a business-like manner, though with humility a deference.

"Slow!" the Ghost repeated.

"Seven years dead," mused Scrooge. "And travelling all t time!"

"The whole time," said the Ghost. "No rest, no peace. I cessant torture of remorse."

"You travel fast?" said Scrooge.

"On the wings of the wind," replied the Ghost.

"You might have got over a great quantity of ground in sev years," said Scrooge.

The Ghost, on hearing this, set up another cry, and clanked chain so hideously in the dead silence of the night, that the W would have been justified in indicting it for a nuisance.

"Oh! captive, bound, and double-ironed," cried the phanto "not to know, that ages of incessant labour, by immortal creatu for this earth must pass into eternity before the good of which is susceptible is all developed. Not to know that any Christ spirit working kindly in its little sphere, whatever it may be, find its mortal life too short for its vast means of usefulness. N to know that no space of regret can make amends for one li opportunity misused! Yet such was I! Oh! such was I!"

"But you were always a good man of business, Jacob," falte Scrooge, who now began to apply this to himself.

"Business!" cried the Ghost, wringing its hands again. Mankind was my business. The common welfare was my siness; charity, mercy, forbearance, and benevolence, were, all, y business. The dealings of my trade were but a drop of water the comprehensive ocean of my business!"

It held up its chain at arm's length, as if that were the cause all its unavailing grief, and flung it heavily upon the ground gain.

"At this time of the rolling year," the spectre said, "I suffer ost. Why did I walk through crowds of fellow-beings with my es turned down, and never raise them to that blessed Star which d the Wise Men to a poor abode! Were there no poor homes which its light would have conducted *me!*"

Scrooge was very much dismayed to hear the spectre going on this rate, and began to quake exceedingly.

"Hear me!" cried the Ghost. "My time is nearly gone."

"I will," said Scrooge. "But don't be hard upon me! Don't flowery, Jacob! Pray!"

"How it is that I appear before you in a shape that you can , I may not tell. I have sat invisible beside you many and any a day."

It was not an agreeable idea. Scrooge shivered, and wiped the rspiration from his brow.

"That is no light part of my penance," pursued the Ghost. I am here to-night to warn you, that you have yet a chance and pe of escaping my fate. A chance and hope of my procuring, benezer."

"You were always a good friend to me," said Scrooge. Thank'ee!"

"You will be haunted," resumed the Ghost, "by Three pirits."

Scrooge's countenance fell almost as low as the Ghost's had ne.

"Is that the chance and hope you mentioned, Jacob?" he manded, in a faltering voice.

"It is."

"I—I think I'd rather not," said Scrooge.

"Without their visits," said the Ghost, "you cannot hope to n the path I tread. Expect the first to-morrow, when the bell s one."

"Couldn't I take 'em all at once, and have it over, Jacob?" ted Scrooge.

"Expect the second on the next night at the same hour. The rd upon the next night when the last stroke of twelve has

ceased to vibrate. Look to see me no more; and look that, fo your own sake, you remember what has passed between us!"

When it had said these words, the spectre took its wrappe from the table, and bound it round its head, as before. Scroog knew this, by the smart sound its teeth made, when the jaw were brought together by the bandage. He ventured to raise hi

eyes again, and found his supernatural visitor confronting him i an erect attitude, with its chain wound over and about its arm.

The apparition walked backward from him; and at every ste it took, the window raised itself a little, so that when the spectr reached it, it was wide open. It beckoned Scrooge to approach which he did. When they were within two paces of each other Marley's Ghost held up its hand, warning him to come no nearer Scrooge stopped.

Not so much in obedience, as in surprise and fear: for on the raising of the hand, he became sensible of confused noises in the air; incoherent sounds of lamentation and regret; wailings inexpressibly sorrowful and self-accusatory. The spectre, after listening for a moment, joined in the mournful dirge; and floated out upon the bleak, dark night.

Scrooge followed to the window: desperate in his curiosity. He looked out.

The air was filled with phantoms, wandering hither and thither in restless haste, and moaning as they went. Every one of them wore chains like Marley's Ghost; some few (they might be guilty governments) were linked together; none were free. Many had been personally known to Scrooge in their lives. He had been quite familiar with one old ghost, in a white waistcoat, with a monstrous iron safe attached to its ankle, who cried piteously at being unable to assist a wretched woman with an infant, whom it saw below, upon a door-step. The misery with them all was, clearly, that they sought to interfere, for good, in human matters, and had lost the power for ever.

Whether these creatures faded into mist, or mist enshrouded them, he could not tell. But they and their spirit voices faded together; and the night became as it had been when he walked home.

Scrooge closed the window, and examined the door by which the Ghost had entered. It was double-locked, as he had locked it with his own hands, and the bolts were undisturbed. He tried to say "Humbug!" but stopped at the first syllable. And being, from the emotion he had undergone, or the fatigues of the day, or his glimpse of the Invisible World, or the dull conversation of the Ghost, or the lateness of the hour, much in need of repose; went straight to bed, without undressing, and fell asleep upon the instant.

Stave Two.

THE FIRST OF THE THREE SPIRITS.

When Scrooge awoke, it was so dark, that looking out of bed, he could scarcely distinguish the transparent window from the opaque walls of his chamber. He was endeavouring to pierce the darkness with his ferret eyes, when the chimes of a neighbouring church struck the four quarters. So he listened for the hour.

"Are you the Spirit, Sir, whose coming was foretold to me?" asked Scrooge.

"I am!"

The voice was soft and gentle. Singularly low, as if instead of being so close beside him, it were at a distance.

"Who, and what are you?" Scrooge demanded.

"I am the Ghost of Christmas Past."

"Long past?" inquired Scrooge: observant of its dwarfish stature.

"No. Your past."

Perhaps, Scrooge could not have told anybody why, if anybody could have asked him; but he had a special desire to see the Spirit in his cap; and begged him to be covered.

"What!" exclaimed the Ghost, "would you so soon put out, with worldly hands, the light I give? Is it not enough that you are one of those whose passions made this cap, and force me through whole trains of years to wear it low upon my brow!"

Scrooge reverently disclaimed all intention to offend, or any knowledge of having wilfully "bonneted" the Spirit at any period of his life. He then made bold to inquire what business brought him there.

"Your welfare!" said the Ghost.

Scrooge expressed himself much obliged, but could not help thinking that a night of unbroken rest would have been more conducive to that end. The Spirit must have heard him thinking, for it said immediately:

"Your reclamation, then. Take heed!"

It put out its strong hand as it spoke, and clasped him gently by the arm.

"Rise! and walk with me!"

It would have been in vain for Scrooge to plead that the weather and the hour were not adapted to pedestrian purposes; that bed was warm, and the thermometer a long way below freezing; that he was clad but lightly in his slippers, dressing-gown, and nightcap; and that he had a cold upon him at that time. The grasp, though gentle as a woman's hand, was not to be resisted. He rose: but finding that the Spirit made towards the window, clasped its robe in supplication.

"I am a mortal," Scrooge remonstrated, "and liable to fall."

"Bear but a touch of my hand *there*," said the Spirit, laying it upon his heart, "and you shall be upheld in more than this!"

As the words were spoken, they passed through the wall, and stood upon an open country road, with fields on either hand. The city had entirely vanished. Not a vestige of it was to be seen.

e darkness and the mist had vanished with it, for it was a clear, d, winter day, with snow upon the ground.

"Good Heaven!" said Scrooge, clasping his hands together, as looked about him. "I was bred in this place. I was a boy re!"

The Spirit gazed upon him mildly. Its gentle touch, though it d been light and instantaneous, appeared still present to the old n's sense of feeling. He was conscious of a thousand odours ating in the air, each one connected with a thousand thoughts, d hopes, and joys, and cares long, long forgotten!

"Your lip is trembling," said the Ghost. "And what is that on your cheek?"

Scrooge muttered, with an unusual catching in his voice, that it a pimple; and begged the Ghost to lead him where he would.

"You recollect the way?" inquired the Spirit.

"Remember it!" cried Scrooge with fervour—"I could walk blindfold."

"Strange to have forgotten it for so many years!" observed the host. "Let us go on."

They walked along the road; Scrooge recognising every gate, d post, and tree; until a little market-town appeared in the tance, with its bridge, its church, and winding river. Some ggy ponies now were seen trotting towards them with boys upon ir backs, who called to other boys in country gigs and carts, ven by farmers. All these boys were in great spirits, and uted to each other, until the broad fields were so full of merry sic, that the crisp air laughed to hear it.

"These are but shadows of the things that have been," said the ost. "They have no consciousness of us."

The jocund travellers came on; and as they came, Scrooge knew d named them every one. Why was he rejoiced beyond all nds to see them! Why did his cold eye glisten, and his heart p up as they went past! Why was he filled with gladness when heard them give each other Merry Christmas, as they parted at ss-roads and bye-ways, for their several homes! What was rry Christmas to Scrooge? Out upon merry Christmas! What d had it ever done to him?

"The school is not quite deserted," said the Ghost. "A ttary child, neglected by his friends, is left there still."

Scrooge said he knew it. And he sobbed.

They left the high-road, by a well-remembered lane, and soon proached a mansion of dull red brick, with a little weathercock-mounted cupola, on the roof, and a bell hanging in it. It was large house, but one of broken fortunes; for the spacious offices

were little used, their walls were damp and mossy, their windo
broken, and their gates decayed. Fowls clucked and strutted
the stables; and the coach-houses and sheds were overrun w
grass. Nor was it more retentive of its ancient state, within;
entering the dreary hall, and glancing through the open doors
many rooms, they found them poorly furnished, cold, and va
There was an earthy savour in the air, a chilly bareness in
place, which associated itself somehow with too much getting
by candle-light, and not too much to eat.

They went, the Ghost and Scrooge, across the hall, to a d
at the back of the house. It opened before them, and disclose
long, bare, melancholy room, made barer still by lines of pl
deal forms and desks. At one of these a lonely boy was read
near a feeble fire; and Scrooge sat down upon a form, and w
to see his poor forgotten self as he had used to be.

Not a latent echo in the house, not a squeak and scuffle fr
the mice behind the panelling, not a drip from the half-thaw
water-spout in the dull yard behind, not a sigh among the leaf
boughs of one despondent poplar, not the idle swinging of
empty store-house door, no, not a clicking in the fire, but fell up
the heart of Scrooge with softening influence, and gave a fr
passage to his tears.

The Spirit touched him on the arm, and pointed to his youn
self, intent upon his reading. Suddenly a man, in fore
garments: wonderfully real and distinct to look at: stood outs
the window, with an axe stuck in his belt, and leading an
laden with wood by the bridle.

"Why, it's Ali Baba!" Scrooge exclaimed in ecstasy. "
dear old honest Ali Baba! Yes, yes, I know! One Christm
time, when yonder solitary child was left here all alone, he
come, for the first time, just like that. Poor boy! A
Valentine," said Scrooge, "and his wild brother, Orson; th
they go! And what's his name, who was put down in
drawers, asleep, at the Gate of Damascus; don't you see hi
And the Sultan's Groom turned upside down by the Genii; th
he is upon his head! Serve him right. I'm glad of it. W
business had *he* to be married to the Princess!"

To hear Scrooge expending all the earnestness of his nature
such subjects, in a most extraordinary voice between laughing
crying; and to see his heightened and excited face; would h
been a surprise to his business friends in the City, indeed.

"There's the Parrot!" cried Scrooge. "Green body
yellow tail, with a thing like a lettuce growing out of the top
his head; there he is! Poor Robin Crusoe, he called him, wh

e came home again after sailing round the island. 'Poor Robin rusoe, where have you been, Robin Crusoe?' The man thought t was dreaming, but he wasn't. It was the Parrot, you know. here goes Friday, running for his life to the little creek! Halloa! loop! Halloo!"

Then, with a rapidity of transition very foreign to his usual haracter, he said, in pity for his former self, "Poor boy!" and hed again.

"I wish," Scrooge muttered, putting his hand in his pocket, nd looking about him, after drying his eyes with his cuff: "but 's too late now."

"What is the matter?" asked the Spirit.

"Nothing," said Scrooge. "Nothing. There was a boy singg a Christmas Carol at my door last night. I should like to ave given him something: that's all."

The Ghost smiled thoughtfully, and waved its hand: saying as did so, "Let us see another Christmas!"

Scrooge's former self grew larger at the words, and the room ame a little darker and more dirty. The panels shrank, the indows cracked; fragments of plaster fell out of the ceiling, and e naked laths were shown instead; but how all this was brought out, Scrooge knew no more than you do. He only knew that it as quite correct; that everything had happened so; that there was, alone again, when all the other boys had gone home for e jolly holidays.

He was not reading now, but walking up and down despairingly. rooge looked at the Ghost, and with a mournful shaking of his ad, glanced anxiously towards the door.

It opened; and a little girl, much younger than the boy, came rting in, and putting her arms about his neck, and often kissing m, addressed him as her "Dear, dear brother."

"I have come to bring you home, dear brother!" said the ild, clapping her tiny hands, and bending down to laugh. "To ng you home, home, home!"

"Home, little Fan?" returned the boy.

"Yes!" said the child, brimful of glee. "Home, for good and Home, for ever and ever. Father is so much kinder than used to be, that home's like Heaven! He spoke so gently to one dear night when I was going to bed, that I was not afraid ask him once more if you might come home; and he said Yes, should; and sent me in a coach to bring you. And you're to a man!" said the child, opening her eyes, "and are never to e back here; but first, we're to be together all the Christmas , and have the merriest time in all the world."

"You are quite a woman, little Fan!" exclaimed the boy.

She clapped her hands and laughed, and tried to touch h head; but being too little, laughed again, and stood on tiptoe embrace him. Then she began to drag him, in her childi eagerness, towards the door; and he, nothing loth to go, acco panied her.

A terrible voice in the hall cried, "Bring down Master Scroog box, there!" and in the hall appeared the schoolmaster himse who glared on Master Scrooge with a ferocious condescension, a threw him into a dreadful state of mind by shaking hands wi him. He then conveyed him and his sister into the veriest c well of a shivering best-parlour that ever was seen, where the ma upon the wall, and the celestial and terrestrial globes in the windo were waxy with cold. Here he produced a decanter of curious light wine, and a block of curiously heavy cake, and administer instalments of those dainties to the young people: at the sa time, sending out a meagre servant to offer a glass of "somethin to the postboy, who answered that he thanked the gentleman, b if it was the same tap as he had tasted before, he had rather n Master Scrooge's trunk being by this time tied on to the top the chaise, the children bade the schoolmaster good-bye rig willingly; and getting into it, drove gaily down the garden-swee the quick wheels dashing the hoar-frost and snow from off t dark leaves of the evergreens like spray.

"Always a delicate creature, whom a breath might ha withered," said the Ghost. "But she had a large heart!"

"So she had," cried Scrooge. "You're right. I'll not ga say it, Spirit. God forbid!"

"She died a woman," said the Ghost, "and had, as I thi children."

"One child," Scrooge returned.

"True," said the Ghost. "Your nephew!"

Scrooge seemed uneasy in his mind; and answered brief "Yes."

Although they had but that moment left the school behi them, they were now in the busy thoroughfares of a city, wh shadowy passengers passed and repassed; where shadowy ca and coaches battled for the way, and all the strife and tumult a real city were. It was made plain enough, by the dressing the shops, that here too it was Christmas time again; but was evening, and the streets were lighted up.

The Ghost stopped at a certain warehouse door, and ask Scrooge if he knew it.

"Know it!" said Scrooge. "Was I apprenticed here?"

They went in. At sight of an old gentleman in a Welsh wig, sitting behind such a high desk, that if he had been two inches taller he must have knocked his head against the ceiling, Scrooge cried in great excitement:

"Why, it's old Fezziwig! Bless his heart; it's Fezziwig alive again!"

Old Fezziwig laid down his pen, and looked up at the clock, which pointed to the hour of seven. He rubbed his hands; adjusted his capacious waistcoat; laughed all over himself, from his shoes to his organ of benevolence; and called out in a comfortable, oily, rich, fat, jovial voice:

"Yo ho, there! Ebenezer! Dick!"

Scrooge's former self, now grown a young man, came briskly in, accompanied by his fellow-'prentice.

"Dick Wilkins, to be sure!" said Scrooge to the Ghost. "Bless me, yes. There he is. He was very much attached to me, was Dick. Poor Dick! Dear, dear!"

"Yo ho, my boys!" said Fezziwig. "No more work to-night. Christmas Eve, Dick. Christmas, Ebenezer! Let's have the shutters up," cried old Fezziwig, with a sharp clap of his hands, "before a man can say Jack Robinson!"

You wouldn't believe how those two fellows went at it! They charged into the street with the shutters—one, two, three—had 'em up in their places—four, five, six—barred 'em and pinned 'em—seven, eight, nine—and came back before you could have got to twelve, panting like race-horses.

"Hilli-ho!" cried old Fezziwig, skipping down from the high desk, with wonderful agility. "Clear away, my lads, and let's have lots of room here! Hilli-ho, Dick! Chirrup, Ebenezer!"

Clear away! There was nothing they wouldn't have cleared away, or couldn't have cleared away, with old Fezziwig looking on. It was done in a minute. Every movable was packed off, as if it were dismissed from public life for evermore; the floor was swept and watered, the lamps were trimmed, fuel was heaped upon the fire; and the warehouse was as snug, and warm, and dry, and bright a ball-room, as you would desire to see upon a winter's night.

In came a fiddler with a music-book, and went up to the high desk, and made an orchestra of it, and tuned like fifty stomach-aches. In came Mrs. Fezziwig, one vast substantial smile. In came the three Miss Fezziwigs, beaming and lovable. In came the six young followers whose hearts they broke. In came all the young men and women employed in the business.

In came the housemaid, with her cousin, the baker. In came the cook, with her brother's particular friend, the milkman. In came the boy from over the way, who was suspected of not having board enough from his master; trying to hide himself behind the girl from next door but one, who was proved to have had her ears pulled by her mistress. In they all came, one after another; some shyly, some boldly, some gracefully, some awkwardly, some pushing, some pulling; in they all came, anyhow and everyhow. Away they all went, twenty couple at once, hands half round and back again the other way; down the middle and up again; round and round in various stages of affectionate grouping; old top couple always turning up in the wrong place; new top couple starting off again, as soon as they got there; all top couples at last, and not a bottom one to help them. When this result was brought about, old Fezziwig, clapping his hands to stop the dance, cried out, "Well done!" and the fiddler plunged his hot face into a pot of porter, especially provided for that purpose. But scorning rest upon his reappearance, he instantly began again, though there were no dancers yet, as if the other fiddler had been carried home, exhausted, on a shutter, and he were a bran-new man resolved to beat him out of sight, or perish.

There were more dances, and there were forfeits, and more dances, and there was cake, and there was negus, and there was a great piece of Cold Roast, and there was a great piece of Cold Boiled, and there were mince-pies, and plenty of beer. But the great effect of the evening came after the Roast and Boiled, when the fiddler (an artful dog, mind! The sort of man who knew his business better than you or I could have told it him!) struck up "Sir Roger de Coverley." Then old Fezziwig stood out to dance with Mrs. Fezziwig. Top couple, too; with a good stiff piece of work cut out for them; three or four and twenty pair of partners; people who were not to be trifled with; people who *would* dance, and had no notion of walking.

But if they had been twice as many: ah, four times: old Fezziwig would have been a match for them, and so would Mrs. Fezziwig. As to *her*, she was worthy to be his partner in every sense of the term. If that's not high praise, tell me higher, and I'll use it. A positive light appeared to issue from Fezziwig's calves. They shone in every part of the dance like moons. You couldn't have predicted, at any given time, what would become of 'em next. And when old Fezziwig and Mrs. Fezziwig had gone all through the dance; advance and retire, hold hands with your partner; bow and curtsey; corkscrew; thread-the-

needle, and back again to your place; Fezziwig "cut"—cut so deftly, that he appeared to wink with his legs, and came upon his feet again without a stagger.

When the clock struck eleven, this domestic ball broke up. Mr. and Mrs. Fezziwig took their stations, one on either side the door, and shaking hands with every person individually as he or she went out, wished him or her a Merry Christmas. When everybody had retired but the two 'prentices, they did the same to them; and thus the cheerful voices died away, and the lads were left to their beds; which were under a counter in the back-shop.

During the whole of this time, Scrooge had acted like a man out of his wits. His heart and soul were in the scene, and with his former self. He corroborated everything, remembered everything, enjoyed everything, and underwent the strangest agitation. It was not until now, when the bright faces of his former self and Dick were turned from them, that he remembered the Ghost, and became conscious that it was looking full upon him, while the light upon its head burnt very clear.

"A small matter," said the Ghost, "to make these silly folks so full of gratitude."

"Small!" echoed Scrooge.

The Spirit signed to him to listen to the two apprentices, who were pouring out their hearts in praise of Fezziwig: and when he had done so, said,

"Why! Is it not? He has spent but a few pounds of your mortal money: three or four, perhaps. Is that so much that he deserves this praise?"

"It isn't that," said Scrooge, heated by the remark, and speaking unconsciously like his former, not his latter, self. "It isn't that, Spirit. He has the power to render us happy or unhappy; to make our service light or burdensome; a pleasure or a toil. Say that his power lies in words and looks; in things so slight and insignificant that it is impossible to add and count 'em up: what then? The happiness he gives, is quite as great as if it cost a fortune."

He felt the Spirit's glance, and stopped.

"What is the matter?" asked the Ghost.

"Nothing particular," said Scrooge.

"Something, I think?" the Ghost insisted.

"No," said Scrooge, "No. I should like to be able to say a word or two to my clerk just now! That's all."

His former self turned down the lamps as he gave utterance to the wish; and Scrooge and the Ghost again stood side by side in the open air.

"My time grows short," observed the Spirit. "Quick!"

This was not addressed to Scrooge, or to any one whom he could see, but it produced an immediate effect. For again Scrooge saw himself. He was older now; a man in the prime of life. His face had not the harsh and rigid lines of later years; but it had begun to wear the signs of care and avarice. There was an eager, greedy, restless motion in the eye, which showed the passion that had taken root, and where the shadow of the growing tree would fall.

He was not alone, but sat by the side of a fair young girl in a mourning-dress: in whose eyes there were tears, which sparkled in the light that shone out of the Ghost of Christmas Past.

"It matters little," she said, softly. "To you, very little. Another idol has displaced me; and if it can cheer and comfort you in time to come, as I would have tried to do, I have no just cause to grieve."

"What Idol has displaced you?" he rejoined.

"A golden one."

"This is the even-handed dealing of the world!" he said. "There is nothing on which it is so hard as poverty; and there is nothing it professes to condemn with such severity as the pursuit of wealth!"

"You fear the world too much," she answered, gently. "All your other hopes have merged into the hope of being beyond the chance of its sordid reproach. I have seen your nobler aspirations fall off one by one, until the master-passion, Gain, engrosses you. Have I not?"

"What then?" he retorted. "Even if I have grown so much wiser, what then? I am not changed towards you."

She shook her head.

"Am I?"

"Our contract is an old one. It was made when we were both poor and content to be so, until, in good season, we could improve our worldly fortune by our patient industry. You *are* changed. When it was made, you were another man."

"I was a boy," he said impatiently.

"Your own feeling tells you that you were not what you are," she returned. "I am. That which promised happiness when we were one in heart, is fraught with misery now that we are two. How often and how keenly I have thought of this, I will not say. It is enough that I *have* thought of it, and can release you."

"Have I ever sought release?"

"In words. No. Never."

"In what, then?"

"In a changed nature; in an altered spirit; in another atmosphere of life; another Hope as its great end. In everything that made my love of any worth or value in your sight. If this had never been between us," said the girl, looking mildly, but with steadiness, upon him; "tell me, would you seek me out and try to win me now? Ah, no!"

He seemed to yield to the justice of this supposition, in spite of himself. But he said with a struggle, "You think not."

"I would gladly think otherwise if I could," she answered, "Heaven knows! When *I* have learned a Truth like this, I know how strong and irresistible it must be. But if you were free to-day, to-morrow, yesterday, can even I believe that you would choose a dowerless girl—you who, in your very confidence with her, weigh everything by Gain: or, choosing her, if for a moment you were false enough to your one guiding principle to do so, do I not know that your repentance and regret would surely follow? I do; and I release you. With a full heart, for the love of him you once were."

He was about to speak; but with her head turned from him, she resumed.

"You may—the memory of what is past half makes me hope you will—have pain in this. A very, very brief time, and you will dismiss the recollection of it, gladly, as an unprofitable dream, from which it happened well that you awoke. May you be happy in the life you have chosen!"

She left him, and they parted.

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, "show me no more! Conduct me home. Why do you delight to torture me?"

"One shadow more!" exclaimed the Ghost.

"No more!" cried Scrooge. "No more. I don't wish to see it. Show me no more!"

But the relentless Ghost pinioned him in both his arms, and forced him to observe what happened next.

They were in another scene and place; a room, not very large nor handsome, but full of comfort. Near to the winter fire sat a beautiful young girl, so like the last that Scrooge believed it was the same, until he saw *her*, now a comely matron, sitting opposite her daughter. The noise in this room was perfectly tumultuous, for there were more children there, than Scrooge in his agitated state of mind could count; and, unlike the celebrated herd in the wood, they were not forty children conducting themselves like one, but every child was conducting itself like forty. The consequences were uproarious beyond belief; but no one seemed to care; on the

contrary, the mother and daughter laughed heartily, and enjoyed very much; and the latter, soon beginning to mingle in the spor got pillaged by the young brigands most ruthlessly. What wo I not have given to be one of them! Though I never could h been so rude, no, no! I wouldn't for the wealth of all the wo have crushed that braided hair, and torn it down; and for precious little shoe, I wouldn't have plucked it off, God bless soul! to save my life. As to measuring her waist in sport, as th did, bold young brood, I couldn't have done it; I should h expected my arm to have grown round it for a punishment, never come straight again. And yet I should have dearly liked own, to have touched her lips; to have questioned her, that might have opened them; to have looked upon the lashes of downcast eyes, and never raised a blush; to have let loose wa of hair, an inch of which would be a keepsake beyond price: short, I should have liked, I do confess, to have had the light license of a child, and yet been man enough to know its value.

But now a knocking at the door was heard, and such a r immediately ensued that she with laughing face and plunde dress was borne towards it the centre of a flushed and boisterc group, just in time to greet the father, who came home attend by a man laden with Christmas toys and presents. Then shouting and the struggling, and the onslaught that was made the defenceless porter! The scaling him with chairs for ladders dive into his pockets, despoil him of brown-paper parcels, h on tight by his cravat, hug him round the neck, pommel his ba and kick his legs in irrepressible affection! The shouts of wond and delight with which the development of every package received! The terrible announcement that the baby had b taken in the act of putting a doll's frying-pan into his mouth, was more than suspected of having swallowed a fictitious turk glued on a wooden platter! The immense relief of finding thi false alarm! The joy, and gratitude, and ecstasy! They are indescribable alike. It is enough that by degrees the children their emotions got out of the parlour and by one stair at a time, to the top of the house; where they went to bed, and so subsid

And now Scrooge looked on more attentively than ever, wh the master of the house, having his daughter leaning fondly on hi sat down with her and her mother at his own fireside; and wh he thought that such another creature, quite as graceful and as of promise, might have called him father, and been a spring-ti in the haggard winter of his life, his sight grew very dim indee

"Belle," said the husband, turning to his wife with a smile, saw an old friend of yours this afternoon."

"Who was it?"

"Guess!"

"How can I? Tut, don't I know?" she added in the same ath, laughing as he laughed. "Mr. Scrooge."

"Mr. Scrooge it was. I passed his office window; and as it not shut up, and he had a candle inside, I could scarcely help ng him. His partner lies upon the point of death, I hear; and re he sat alone. Quite alone in the world, I do believe."

"Spirit!" said Scrooge in a broken voice, "remove me from place."

"I told you these were shadows of the things that have been," the Ghost. "That they are what they are, do not blame me!"

"Remove me!" Scrooge exclaimed, "I cannot bear it!"

He turned upon the Ghost, and seeing that it looked upon him h a face, in which in some strange way there were fragments of the faces it had shown him, wrestled with it.

"Leave me! Take me back. Haunt me no longer!"

In the struggle, if that can be called a struggle in which the ost with no visible resistance on its own part was undisturbed any effort of its adversary, Scrooge observed that its light was ning high and bright; and dimly connecting that with its uence over him, he seized the extinguisher-cap, and by a sudden ion pressed it down upon its head.

The Spirit dropped beneath it, so that the extinguisher cover its whole form; but though Scrooge pressed it down with all force, he could not hide the light, which streamed from under in an unbroken flood upon the ground.

He was conscious of being exhausted, and overcome by an ir sistible drowsiness; and, further, of being in his own bedroo He gave the cap a parting squeeze, in which his hand relaxed; a had barely time to reel to bed, before he sank into a heavy slee

Stave Three.

THE SECOND OF THE THREE SPIRITS.

AWAKING in the middle of a prodigiously tough snore, a sitting up in bed to get his thoughts together, Scrooge had occasion to be told that the bell was again upon the stroke of O He felt that he was restored to consciousness in the right nick time, for the especial purpose of holding a conference with second messenger despatched to him through Jacob Marle intervention. But, finding that he turned uncomfortably c when he began to wonder which of his curtains this new spec would draw back, he put them every one aside with his o hands, and lying down again, established a sharp look-out round the bed. For he wished to challenge the Spirit on moment of its appearance, and did not wish to be taken surprise and made nervous.

Gentlemen of the free-and-easy sort, who plume themselves being acquainted with a move or two, and being usually equal the time-of-day, express the wide range of their capacity adventure by observing that they are good for anything fr pitch-and-toss to manslaughter; between which opposite extren no doubt, there lies a tolerably wide and comprehensive range subjects. Without venturing for Scrooge quite as hardily as t I don't mind calling on you to believe that he was ready fo good broad field of strange appearances, and that nothing betw a baby and rhinoceros would have astonished him very much.

Now, being prepared for almost anything, he was not by means prepared for nothing; and, consequently, when the struck One, and no shape appeared, he was taken with a viol fit of trembling. Five minutes, ten minutes, a quarter of an h went by, yet nothing came. All this time, he lay upon his b the very core and centre of a blaze of ruddy light, which strean

SCROOGE'S THIRD VISITOR.

and icy water. The sky was gloomy, and the shortest str were choked up with a dingy mist, half thawed half frozen, wh heavier particles descended in a shower of sooty atoms, as if the chimneys in Great Britain had, by one consent, caught and were blazing away to their dear hearts' content. There nothing very cheerful in the climate or the town, and yet there an air of cheerfulness abroad that the clearest summe and brightest summer sun might have endeavoured to diffus vain.

For, the people who were shovelling away on the house- were jovial and full of glee; calling out to one another from parapets, and now and then exchanging a facetious snowbal better-natured missile far than many a wordy jest—laugh heartily if it went right and not less heartily if it went wr The poulterers' shops were still half open, and the fruiterers' w radiant in their glory. There were great, round, pot-bel baskets of chestnuts, shaped like the waistcoats of jolly old gen men, lolling at the doors, and tumbling out into the street in t apoplectic opulence. There were ruddy, brown-faced broad-girt Spanish Onions, shining in the fatness of their growth like Spa Friars; and winking from their shelves in wanton slyness at girls as they went by, and glanced demurely at the hung mistletoe. There were pears and apples, clustered high blooming pyramids; there were bunches of grapes, made, in shopkeepers' benevolence, to dangle from conspicuous hooks, t people's mouths might water gratis as they passed; there w piles of filberts, mossy and brown, recalling, in their fragra ancient walks among the woods, and pleasant shufflings an deep through withered leaves; there were Norfolk Biffins, squ and swarthy, setting off the yellow of the oranges and lem and, in the great compactness of their juicy persons, urgen entreating and beseeching to be carried home in paper bags eaten after dinner. The very gold and silver fish, set fo among these choice fruits in a bowl, though members of a d and stagnant-blooded race, appeared to know that there something going on; and, to a fish, went gasping round and rou their little world in slow and passionless excitement.

The Grocers'! oh the Grocers'! nearly closed, with perhaps t shutters down, or one; but through those gaps such glimps It was not alone that the scales descending on the counter mad merry sound, or that the twine and roller parted company so brisk or that the canisters were rattled up and down like juggling tric or even that the blended scents of tea and coffee were so grate to the nose, or even that the raisins were so plentiful and rare, t

monds so extremely white, the sticks of cinnamon so long and raight, the other spices so delicious, the candied fruits so caked ad spotted with molten sugar as to make the coldest lookers-on el faint and subsequently bilious. Nor was it that the figs were oist and pulpy, or that the French plums blushed in modest tart-ess from their highly-decorated boxes, or that everything was ood to eat and in its Christmas dress: but the customers were all o hurried and so eager in the hopeful promise of the day, that they umbled up against each other at the door, clashing their wicker askets wildly, and left their purchases upon the counter, and came unning back to fetch them, and committed hundreds of the like istakes in the best humour possible; while the Grocer and his eople were so frank and fresh that the polished hearts with which hey fastened their aprons behind might have been their own, worn utside for general inspection, and for Christmas daws to peck at f they chose.

But soon the steeples called good people all, to church and hapel, and away they came, flocking through the streets in their est clothes, and with their gayest faces. And at the same time here emerged from scores of bye-streets, lanes, and nameless urnings, innumerable people, carrying their dinners to the bakers' hops. The sight of these poor revellers appeared to interest the Spirit very much, for he stood with Scrooge beside him in a baker's oorway, and taking off the covers as their bearers passed, sprinkled ncense on their dinners from his torch. And it was a very ncommon kind of torch, for once or twice when there were angry words between some dinner-carriers who had jostled with each other, he shed a few drops of water on them from it, and their good humour was restored directly. For they said, it was a shame to quarrel pon Christmas Day. And so it was! God love it, so it was!

In time the bells ceased, and the bakers were shut up; and yet here was a genial shadowing forth of all these dinners and the progress of their cooking, in the thawed blotch of wet above each baker's oven; where the pavement smoked as if its stones were cooking too.

"Is there a peculiar flavour in what you sprinkle from your torch?" asked Scrooge.

"There is. My own."

"Would it apply to any kind of dinner on this day?" asked Scrooge.

"To any kindly given. To a poor one most."

"Why to a poor one most?" asked Scrooge.

"Because it needs it most."

"Spirit," said Scrooge, after a moment's thought, "I wonder

you, of all the beings in the many worlds about us, should desi
to cramp these people's opportunities of innocent enjoyment."

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You would deprive them of their means of dining every seven
day, often the only day on which they can be said to dine at all
said Scrooge. "Wouldn't you?"

"I!" cried the Spirit.

"You seek to close these places on the Seventh Day?" sa
Scrooge. "And it comes to the same thing."

"*I* seek!" exclaimed the Spirit.

"Forgive me if I am wrong. It has been done in your name,
at least in that of your family," said Scrooge.

"There are some upon this earth of yours," returned the Spiri
"who lay claim to know us, and who do their deeds of passio
pride, ill-will, hatred, envy, bigotry, and selfishness in our nam
who are as strange to us and all our kith and kin, as if they ha
never lived. Remember that, and charge their doings on ther
selves, not us."

Scrooge promised that he would; and they went on, invisibl
as they had been before, into the suburbs of the town. It was
remarkable quality of the Ghost (which Scrooge had observed
the baker's), that notwithstanding his gigantic size, he coul
accommodate himself to any place with ease; and that he stoo
beneath a low roof quite as gracefully and like a supernatur
creature, as it was possible he could have done in any lofty hall.

And perhaps it was the pleasure the good Spirit had in showin
off this power of his, or else it was his own kind, generous, heart
nature, and his sympathy with all poor men, that led him straigh
to Scrooge's clerk's; for there he went, and took Scrooge with hi
holding to his robe; and on the threshold of the door the Spiri
smiled, and stopped to bless Bob Cratchit's dwelling with th
sprinklings of his torch. Think of that! Bob had but fiftee
"Bob" a-week himself; he pocketed on Saturdays but fiftee
copies of his Christian name; and yet the Ghost of Christma
Present blessed his four-roomed house!

Then up rose Mrs. Cratchit, Cratchit's wife, dressed out bu
poorly in a twice-turned gown, but brave in ribbons, which ar
cheap and make a goodly show for sixpence; and she laid the cloth
assisted by Belinda Cratchit, second of her daughters, also brave i
ribbons; while Master Peter Cratchit plunged a fork into th
saucepan of potatoes, and getting the corners of his monstrou
shirt collar (Bob's private property, conferred upon his son and hei
in honour of the day) into his mouth, rejoiced to find himself s
gallantly attired, and yearned to show his linen in the fashionable

arks. And now two smaller Cratchits, boy and girl, came tearing , screaming that outside the baker's they had smelt the goose, nd known it for their own; and basking in luxurious thoughts of age-and-onion, these young Cratchits danced about the table, and xalted Master Peter Cratchit to the skies, while he (not proud, lthough his collars nearly choked him) blew the fire, until the slow otatoes bubbling up, knocked loudly at the saucepan-lid to be let ut and peeled.

"What has ever got your precious father then?" said Mrs. ratchit. "And your brother, Tiny Tim! And Martha warn't late last Christmas Day by half-an-hour!"

"Here's Martha, mother!" said a girl, appearing as she oke.

"Here's Martha, mother!" cried the two young Cratchits. Hurrah! There's *such* a goose, Martha!"

"Why, bless your heart alive, my dear, how late you are!" aid Mrs. Cratchit, kissing her a dozen times, and taking off her hawl and bonnet for her with officious zeal.

"We'd a deal of work to finish up last night," replied the girl, and had to clear away this morning, mother!"

"Well! Never mind so long as you are come," said Mrs. ratchit. "Sit ye down before the fire, my dear, and have a warm, ord bless ye!"

"No, no! There's father coming," cried the two young ratchits, who were everywhere at once. "Hide, Martha, hide!"

So Martha hid herself, and in came little Bob, the father, with t least three feet of comforter exclusive of the fringe, hanging own before him; and his threadbare clothes darned up and brushed, o look seasonable; and Tiny Tim upon his shoulder. Alas for iny Tim, he bore a little crutch, and had his limbs supported by n iron frame!

"Why, where's our Martha?" cried Bob Cratchit, looking ound.

"Not coming," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"Not coming!" said Bob, with a sudden declension in his high pirits; for he had been Tim's blood horse all the way from hurch, and had come home rampant. "Not coming upon Christmas Day!"

Martha didn't like to see him disappointed, if it were only in ke; so she came out prematurely from behind the closet door, nd ran into his arms, while the two young Cratchits hustled Tiny im, and bore him off into the wash-house, that he might hear the udding singing in the copper.

"And how did little Tim behave?" asked Mrs. Cratchit, when

she had rallied Bob on his credulity, and Bob had hugged daughter to his heart's content.

"As good as gold," said Bob, "and better. Somehow he g thoughtful, sitting by himself so much, and thinks the strang things you ever heard. He told me, coming home, that he hop the people saw him in the church, because he was a cripple, and might be pleasant to them to remember upon Christmas Day, w made lame beggars walk and blind men see."

Bob's voice was tremulous when he told them this, and trembl more when he said that Tiny Tim was growing strong and heart

His active little crutch was heard upon the floor, and ba came Tiny Tim before another word was spoken, escorted by brother and sister to his stool before the fire; and while Bo turning up his cuffs—as if, poor fellow, they were capable of bei made more shabby—compounded some hot mixture in a jug wi gin and lemons, and stirred it round and round and put it on t hob to simmer; Master Peter, and the two ubiquitous you Cratchits went to fetch the goose, with which they soon return in high procession.

Such a bustle ensued that you might have thought a goose t rarest of all birds; a feathered phenomenon, to which a bla swan was a matter of course—and in truth it was something ve like it in that house. Mrs. Cratchit made the gravy (ready befo hand in a little saucepan) hissing hot; Master Peter mashed t potatoes with incredible vigour; Miss Belinda sweetened up t apple-sauce; Martha dusted the hot plates; Bob took Tiny Ti beside him in a tiny corner at the table; the two young Cratchi set chairs for everybody, not forgetting themselves, and mounti guard upon their posts, crammed spoons into their mouths, le they should shriek for goose before their turn came to be helpe At last the dishes were set on, and grace was said. It w succeeded by a breathless pause, as Mrs. Cratchit, looking slow all along the carving-knife, prepared to plunge it in the breast; b when she did, and when the long expected gush of stuffing issue forth, one murmur of delight arose all round the board, and eve Tiny Tim, excited by the two young Cratchits, beat on the tab with the handle of his knife, and feebly cried Hurrah!

There never was such a goose. Bob said he didn't believ there ever was such a goose cooked. Its tenderness and flavou size and cheapness, were the themes of universal admiratio Eked out by the apple sauce and mashed potatoes, it was sufficient dinner for the whole family; indeed, as Mrs. Cratchi said with great delight (surveying one small atom of a bone upo the dish), they hadn't ate it all at last! Yet every one had ha

ough, and the youngest Cratchits in particular, were steeped in ge and onion to the eyebrows! But now, the plates being anged by Miss Belinda, Mrs. Cratchit left the room alone—too rvous to bear witnesses—to take the pudding up and bring it in.

Suppose it should not be done enough! Suppose it should eak in turning out! Suppose somebody should have got over e wall of the back-yard, and stolen it, while they were merry ith the goose—a supposition at which the two young Cratchits eame livid! All sorts of horrors were supposed.

Hallo! A great deal of steam! The pudding was out of the pper. A smell like a washing-day! That was the cloth. A ell like an eating-house and a pastrycook's next door to each her, with a laundress's next door to that! That was the dding! In half a minute Mrs. Cratchit entered—flushed, but niling proudly—with the pudding, like a speckled cannon-ball, so rd and firm, blazing in half of half-a-quartern of ignited brandy, d bedight with Christmas holly stuck into the top.

Oh, a wonderful pudding! Bob Cratchit said, and calmly too, at he regarded it as the greatest success achieved by Mrs. ratchit since their marriage. Mrs. Cratchit said that now the eight was off her mind, she would confess she had had her doubts bout the quantity of flour. Everybody had something to say bout it, but nobody said or thought it was at all a small pudding r a large family. It would have been flat heresy to do so. Any ratchit would have blushed to hint at such a thing.

At last the dinner was all done, the cloth was cleared, the earth swept, and the fire made up. The compound in the jug ing tasted, and considered perfect, apples and oranges were put pon the table, and a shovel-full of chestnuts on the fire. Then ll the Cratchit family drew round the hearth, in what Bob ratchit called a circle, meaning half a one; and at Bob Cratchit's bow stood the family display of glass. Two tumblers, and a tstard-cup without a handle.

These held the hot stuff from the jug, however, as well as olden goblets would have done; and Bob served it out with aming looks, while the chestnuts on the fire sputtered and acked noisily. Then Bob proposed:

"A Merry Christmas to us all, my dears. God bless us!"

Which all the family re-echoed.

"God bless us every one!" said Tiny Tim, the last of all.

He sat very close to his father's side upon his little stool. Bob eld his withered little hand in his, as if he loved the child, and ished to keep him by his side, and dreaded that he might be aken from him.

"Spirit," said Scrooge, with an interest he had never f before, "tell me if Tiny Tim will live."

"I see a vacant seat," replied the Ghost, "in the poor chimn corner, and a crutch without an owner, carefully preserved. these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, the child will di

"No, no," said Scrooge. "Oh no, kind Spirit! say he will spared."

"If these shadows remain unaltered by the Future, none otl of my race," returned the Ghost, "will find him here. Wl then? If he be like to die, he had better do it, and decrease t surplus population."

Scrooge hung his head to hear his own words quoted by t Spirit, and was overcome with penitence and grief.

"Man," said the Ghost, "if man you be in heart, not adama forbear that wicked cant until you have discovered What the surpl is, and Where it is. Will you decide what men shall live, wh men shall die? It may be, that in the sight of Heaven, you a more worthless and less fit to live than millions like this po man's child. Oh God! to hear the Insect on the leaf pronounci on the too much life among his hungry brothers in the dust!"

Scrooge bent before the Ghost's rebuke, and trembling cast l eyes upon the ground. But he raised them speedily, on heari his own name.

"Mr. Scrooge!" said Bob; "I'll give you Mr. Scrooge, t Founder of the Feast!"

"The Founder of the Feast indeed!" cried Mrs. Cratch reddening. "I wish I had him here. I'd give him a piece of t mind to feast upon, and I hope he'd have a good appetite for it."

"My dear," said Bob, "the children! Christmas Day."

"It should be Christmas Day, I am sure," said she, "on whi one drinks the health of such an odious, stingy, hard, unfeeli man as Mr. Scrooge. You know he is, Robert! Nobody kno it better than you do, poor fellow!"

"My dear," was Bob's mild answer, "Christmas Day."

"I'll drink his health for your sake and the Day's," said M Cratchit, "not for his. Long life to him! A Merry Christm and a Happy New Year! He'll be very merry and very happy, have no doubt!"

The children drank the toast after her. It was the first their proceedings which had no heartiness in it. Tiny Tim dra it last of all, but he didn't care twopence for it. Scrooge was t Ogre of the family. The mention of his name cast a dark shadc on the party, which was not dispelled for full five minutes.

After it had passed away, they were ten times merrier th

fore, from the mere relief of Scrooge the Baleful being done with. b Cratchit told them how he had a situation in his eye for ster Peter, which would bring in, if obtained, full five-and-six- nce weekly. The two young Cratchits laughed tremendously at idea of Peter's being a man of business; and Peter himself ked thoughtfully at the fire from between his collars, as if he re deliberating what particular investments he should favour en he came into the receipt of that bewildering income. rtha, who was a poor apprentice at a milliner's, then told m what kind of work she had to do, and how many hours she rked at a stretch, and how she meant to lie abed to-morrow rning for a good long rest; to-morrow being a holiday she sed at home. Also how she had seen a countess and a lord ne days before, and how the lord "was much about as tall as ter;" at which Peter pulled up his collars so high that you ldn't have seen his head if you had been there. All this time chestnuts and the jug went round and round; and bye-and- e they had a song, about a lost child travelling in the snow, m Tiny Tim, who had a plaintive little voice, and sang it very ll indeed.

There was nothing of high mark in this. They were not a ndsome family; they were not well dressed; their shoes were from being water-proof; their clothes were scanty; and Peter ght have known, and very likely did, the inside of a pawn- ker's. But, they were happy, grateful, pleased with one ther, and contented with the time; and when they faded, and ked happier yet in the bright sprinklings of the Spirit's torch at rting, Scrooge had his eye upon them, and especially on Tiny m, until the last.

By this time it was getting dark, and snowing pretty heavily; l as Scrooge and the Spirit went along the streets, the bright- s of the roaring fires in kitchens, parlours, and all sorts of rooms, s wonderful. Here, the flickering of the blaze showed prepara- ns for a cosy dinner, with hot plates baking through and through fore the fire, and deep red curtains, ready to be drawn to shut cold and darkness. There, all the children of the house were ning out into the snow to meet their married sisters, brothers, sins, uncles, aunts, and be the first to greet them. Here, again, re shadows on the window-blind of guests assembling; and there group of handsome girls, all hooded and fur-booted, and all ttering at once, tripped lightly off to some near neighbour's use; where, woe upon the single man who saw them enter— ful witches: well they knew it—in a glow!

But if you had judged from the numbers of people on their way

to friendly gatherings, you might have thought that no one was
home to give them welcome when they got there, instead of ev
house expecting company, and piling up its fires half-chimney hi
Blessings on it, how the Ghost exulted! How it bared its brea
of breast, and opened its capacious palm, and floated on, outpouri
with a generous hand, its bright and harmless mirth on everythi
within its reach! The very lamplighter, who ran on before dott
the dusky street with specks of light, and who was dressed
spend the evening somewhere, laughed out loudly as the Sp
passed: though little kenned the lamplighter that he had
company but Christmas!

And now, without a word of warning from the Ghost, t
stood upon a bleak and desert moor, where monstrous masses
rude stone were cast about, as though it were the burial-place
giants; and water spread itself wheresoever it listed, or wo
have done so, but for the frost that held it prisoner; and noth
grew but moss and furze, and coarse, rank grass. Down in
west the setting sun had left a streak of fiery red, which gla
upon the desolation for an instant, like a sullen eye, and frown
lower, lower, lower yet, was lost in the thick gloom of dark
night.

"What place is this?" asked Scrooge.

"A place where Miners live, who labour in the bowels of
earth," returned the Spirit. "But they know me. See!"

A light shone from the window of a hut, and swiftly t
advanced towards it. Passing through the wall of mud and sto
they found a cheerful company assembled round a glowing f
An old, old man and woman, with their children and their childr
children, and another generation beyond that, all decked out g
in their holiday attire. The old man, in a voice that seldom
above the howling of the wind upon the barren waste, was sing
them a Christmas song; it had been a very old song when he
a boy; and from time to time they all joined in the chorus.
surely as they raised their voices, the old man got quite blithe
loud; and so surely as they stopped, his vigour sank again.

The Spirit did not tarry here, but bade Scrooge hold his r
and passing on above the moor, sped whither? Not to sea?
sea. To Scrooge's horror, looking back, he saw the last of
land, a frightful range of rocks, behind them; and his ears
deafened by the thundering of water, as it rolled, and roared,
raged among the dreadful caverns it had worn, and fiercely t
to undermine the earth.

Built upon a dismal reef of sunken rocks, some league o
from shore, on which the waters chafed and dashed, the wild

rough, there stood a solitary lighthouse. Great heaps of sea-
ed clung to its base, and storm-birds—born of the wind one
ight suppose, as sea-weed of the water—rose and fell about it,
e the waves they skimmed.

But even here, two men who watched the light had made a
e, that through the loophole in the thick stone wall shed out a
y of brightness on the awful sea. Joining their horny hands
er the rough table at which they sat, they wished each other
erry Christmas in their can of grog; and one of them: the elder,
o, with his face all damaged and scarred with hard weather, as
e figure-head of an old ship might be: struck up a sturdy song
at was like a Gale in itself.

Again the Ghost sped on, above the black and heaving sea—
, on—until, being far away, as he told Scrooge, from any shore,
ey lighted on a ship. They stood beside the helmsman at the
heel, the look-out in the bow, the officers who had the watch;
rk, ghostly figures in their several stations; but every man
nong them hummed a Christmas tune, or had a Christmas
ought, or spoke below his breath to his companion of some by-
ne Christmas Day, with homeward hopes belonging to it. And
ery man on board, waking or sleeping, good or bad, had had a
nder word for another on that day than on any day in the year;
d had shared to some extent in its festivities; and had remem-
red those he cared for at a distance, and had known that they
lighted to remember him.

It was a great surprise to Scrooge, while listening to the moan-
g of the wind, and thinking what a solemn thing it was to move
through the lonely darkness over an unknown abyss, whose
pths were secrets as profound as Death: it was a great surprise
Scrooge, while thus engaged, to hear a hearty laugh. It was a
ch greater surprise to Scrooge to recognise it as his own nephew's
d to find himself in a bright, dry, gleaming room, with the Spirit
anding smiling by his side, and looking at that same nephew with
proving affability.

"Ha, ha!" laughed Scrooge's nephew. "Ha, ha, ha!"

If you should happen, by any unlikely chance, to know a man
ore blest in a laugh than Scrooge's nephew, all I can say is, I
ould like to know him too. Introduce him to me, and I'll
ltivate his acquaintance.

It is a fair, even-handed, noble adjustment of things, that while
ere is infection in disease and sorrow, there is nothing in the
rld so irresistibly contagious as laughter and good-humour.
hen Scrooge's nephew laughed in this way: holding his sides,
lling his head, and twisting his face into the most extravagant

contortions: Scrooge's niece, by marriage, laughed as heartily as he. And their assembled friends being not a bit behindhand roared out, lustily.

"Ha, ha! Ha, ha, ha, ha!"

"He said that Christmas was a humbug, as I live!" cried Scrooge's nephew. "He believed it too!"

"More shame for him, Fred!" said Scrooge's niece, indignantly. Bless those women; they never do anything by halves. They are always in earnest.

She was very pretty: exceedingly pretty. With a dimpled, surprised-looking, capital face; a ripe little mouth, that seemed made to be kissed—as no doubt it was; all kinds of good little dots about her chin, that melted into one another when she laughed; and the sunniest pair of eyes you ever saw in any little creature's head. Altogether she was what you would have called provoking, you know; but satisfactory, too. Oh, perfectly satisfactory!

"He's a comical old fellow," said Scrooge's nephew, "that's the truth; and not so pleasant as he might be. However, his offences carry their own punishment, and I have nothing to say against him."

"I'm sure he is very rich, Fred," hinted Scrooge's niece. "At least you always tell *me* so."

"What of that, my dear!" said Scrooge's nephew. "His wealth is of no use to him. He don't do any good with it. He don't make himself comfortable with it. He hasn't the satisfaction of thinking—ha, ha, ha!—that he is ever going to benefit Us with it."

"I have no patience with him," observed Scrooge's niece. Scrooge's niece's sisters, and all the other ladies, expressed the same opinion.

"Oh, I have!" said Scrooge's nephew. "I am sorry for him; I couldn't be angry with him if I tried. Who suffers by his ill whims? Himself, always. Here, he takes it into his head to dislike us, and he won't come and dine with us. What's the consequence? He don't lose much of a dinner."

"Indeed, I think he loses a very good dinner," interrupted Scrooge's niece. Everybody else said the same, and they must be allowed to have been competent judges, because they had just had dinner; and, with the dessert upon the table, were clustered round the fire, by lamplight.

"Well! I'm very glad to hear it," said Scrooge's nephew, "because I haven't any great faith in these young housekeepers. What do *you* say, Topper?"

Topper had clearly got his eye upon one of Scrooge's niece's sisters, for he answered that a bachelor was a wretched outcast, who had no right to express an opinion on the subject. Whereat Scrooge's niece's sister—the plump one with the lace tucker: not the one with the roses—blushed.

"Do go on, Fred," said Scrooge's niece, clapping her hands. "He never finishes what he begins to say! He is such a ridiculous fellow!"

Scrooge's nephew revelled in another laugh, and as it was impossible to keep the infection off; though the plump sister tried hard to do it with aromatic vinegar; his example was unanimously followed.

"I was only going to say," said Scrooge's nephew, "that the consequence of his taking a dislike to us, and not making merry with us, is, as I think, that he loses some pleasant moments, which could do him no harm. I am sure he loses pleasanter companions than he can find in his own thoughts, either in his mouldy old office, or his dusty chambers. I mean to give him the same chance every year, whether he likes it or not, for I pity him. He may rail at Christmas till he dies, but he can't help thinking better of it—I defy him—if he finds me going there, in good temper, year after year, and saying 'Uncle Scrooge, how are you?' If it only puts him in the vein to leave his poor clerk fifty pounds, *that's* something; and I think I shook him yesterday."

It was their turn to laugh now at the notion of his shaking Scrooge. But being thoroughly good-natured, and not much caring what they laughed at, so that they laughed at any rate, he encouraged them in their merriment, and passed the bottle joyously.

After tea, they had some music. For they were a musical family, and knew what they were about, when they sang a Glee or Catch, I can assure you: especially Topper, who could growl away in the bass like a good one, and never swell the large veins in his forehead, or get red in the face over it. Scrooge's niece played well upon the harp; and played among other tunes a simple little air (a mere nothing: you might learn to whistle it in two minutes), which had been familiar to the child who fetched Scrooge from the boarding-school, as he had been reminded by the Ghost of Christmas Past. When this strain of music sounded, all the things that Ghost had shown him, came upon his mind; he softened more and more; and thought that if he could have listened to it often, years ago, he might have cultivated the kindnesses of life for his own happiness with his own hands, without resorting to the sexton's spade that buried Jacob Marley.

But they didn't devote the whole evening to music. After while they played at forfeits; for it is good to be children som times, and never better than at Christmas, when its might Founder was a child himself. Stop! There was first a game blind-man's buff. Of course there was. And I no more belie Topper was really blind than I believe he had eyes in his boot My opinion is, that it was a done thing between him and Scrooge nephew: and that the Ghost of Christmas Present knew it. Th way he went after that plump sister in the lace tucker, was a outrage on the credulity of human nature. Knocking down th fire-irons, tumbling over the chairs, bumping up against the pian smothering himself among the curtains, wherever she went, the went he. He always knew where the plump sister was. H wouldn't catch anybody else. If you had fallen up against hi as some of them did, and stood there; he would have made feint of endeavouring to seize you, which would have been affront to your understanding; and would instantly have sidl off in the direction of the plump sister. She often cried out th it wasn't fair; and it really was not. But when at last, he caug her; when, in spite of all her silken rustlings, and her rapi flutterings past him, he got her into a corner whence there was escape; then his conduct was the most execrable. For his pr tending not to know her; his pretending that it was necessary touch her head-dress, and further to assure himself of her identit by pressing a certain ring upon her finger, and a certain cha about her neck; was vile, monstrous! No doubt she told hi her opinion of it, when, another blind man being in office, they we so very confidential together, behind the curtains.

Scrooge's niece was not one of the blind-man's buff party, b was made comfortable with a large chair and a footstool, in a sn corner, where the Ghost and Scrooge were close behind her. B she joined in the forfeits, and loved her love to admiration wi all the letters of the alphabet. Likewise at the game of Ho When, and Where, she was very great, and to the secret joy Scrooge's nephew, beat her sisters hollow: though they were sha girls too, as Topper could have told you. There might have be twenty people there, young and old, but they all played, and did Scrooge; for, wholly forgetting in the interest he had in wh was going on, that his voice made no sound in their ears, he som times came out with his guess quite loud, and very often guess quite right, too; for the sharpest needle, best Whitechap warranted not to cut in the eye, was not sharper than Scroog blunt as he took it in his head to be.

The Ghost was greatly pleased to find him in this mood, an

ooked upon him with such favour, that he begged like a boy to be llowed to stay until the guests departed. But this the Spirit aid could not be done.

"Here is a new game," said Scrooge. "One half-hour, Spirit, nly one!"

It is a Game called Yes and No, where Scrooge's nephew had o think of something, and the rest must find out what; he only nswering to their questions yes or no, as the case was. The risk fire of questioning to which he was exposed, elicited from im that he was thinking of an animal, a live animal, rather a disagreeable animal, a savage animal, an animal that growled and grunted sometimes, and talked sometimes, and lived in London, nd walked about the streets, and wasn't made a show of, and asn't led by anybody, and didn't live in a menagerie, and was ever killed in a market, and was not a horse, or an ass, or a cow, r a bull, or a tiger, or a dog, or a pig, or a cat, or a bear. At very fresh question that was put to him, this nephew burst into fresh roar of laughter; and was so inexpressibly tickled, that he as obliged to get up off the sofa and stamp. At last the plump ister, falling into a similar state, cried out:

"I have found it out! I know what it is, Fred! I know hat it is!"

"What is it?" cried Fred.

"It's your Uncle Scro-o-o-o-oge!"

Which it certainly was. Admiration was the universal senti- ent, though some objected that the reply to "Is it a bear?" ught to have been "Yes;" inasmuch as an answer in the negative as sufficient to have diverted their thoughts from Mr. Scrooge, pposing they had ever had any tendency that way.

"He has given us plenty of merriment, I am sure," said Fred, and it would be ungrateful not to drink his health. Here is a lass of mulled wine ready to our hand at the moment; and I say, Uncle Scrooge!'"

"Well! Uncle Scrooge!" they cried.

"A Merry Christmas and a Happy New Year to the old man, hatever he is!" said Scrooge's nephew. "He wouldn't take it om me, but may he have it, nevertheless. Uncle Scrooge!"

Uncle Scrooge had imperceptibly become so gay and light of eart, that he would have pledged the unconscious company in eturn, and thanked them in an inaudible speech, if the Ghost had iven him time. But the whole scene passed off in the breath of he last word spoken by his nephew; and he and the Spirit were gain upon their travels.

Much they saw, and far they went, and many homes they

visited, but always with a happy end. The Spirit stood beside sick beds, and they were cheerful; on foreign lands, and they were close at home; by struggling men, and they were patient in their greater hope; by poverty, and it was rich. In almshouse hospital, and jail, in misery's every refuge, where vain man in his little brief authority had not made fast the door, and barred the Spirit out, he left his blessing, and taught Scrooge his precepts.

It was a long night, if it were only a night; but Scrooge had his doubts of this, because the Christmas Holidays appeared to be condensed into the space of time they passed together. It was strange, too, that while Scrooge remained unaltered in his outward form, the Ghost grew older, clearly older. Scrooge had observed this change, but never spoke of it, until they left a children's Twelfth Night party, when, looking at the Spirit as they stood together in an open place, he noticed that its hair was grey.

"Are spirits' lives so short?" asked Scrooge.

"My life upon this globe, is very brief," replied the Ghost. "It ends to-night."

"To-night!" cried Scrooge.

"To-night at midnight. Hark! The time is drawing near."

The chimes were ringing the three quarters past eleven at this moment.

"Forgive me if I am not justified in what I ask," said Scrooge, looking intently at the Spirit's robe, "but I see something strange, and not belonging to yourself, protruding from your skirts. Is it a foot or a claw!"

"It might be a claw, for the flesh there is upon it," was the Spirit's sorrowful reply. "Look here."

From the foldings of its robe, it brought two children, wretched, abject, frightful, hideous, miserable. They knelt down at its feet, and clung upon the outside of its garment.

"Oh, Man! look here. Look, look, down here!" exclaimed the Ghost.

They were a boy and girl. Yellow, meagre, ragged, scowling, wolfish; but prostrate, too, in their humility. Where graceful youth should have filled their features out, and touched them with its freshest tints, a stale and shrivelled hand, like that of age, had pinched, and twisted them, and pulled them into shreds. Where angels might have sat enthroned, devils lurked, and glared out menacing. No change, no degradation, no perversion of humanity in any grade, through all the mysteries of wonderful creation, has monsters half so horrible and dread.

Scrooge started back, appalled. Having them shown to him in this way, he tried to say they were fine children, but the word

oked themselves, rather than be parties to a lie of such ormous magnitude.

"Spirit! are they yours?" Scrooge could say no more.

"They are Man's," said the Spirit, looking down upon them. And they cling to me, appealing from their fathers. This boy Ignorance. This girl is Want. Beware them both, and all of eir degree, but most of all beware this boy, for on his brow I see

at writte which is Doom, unless the writing be erased. Deny :" cried the Spirit, stretching out its hand towards the city. Slander those who tell it ye! Admit it for your factious urposes, nd make it worse! And bide the end!"

"Have they no refuge or resource?" cried Scrooge.

"Are there no prisons?" said the Spirit, turning on him for he last time with his own words. "Are there no workhouses?"

The bell struck twelve.

Scrooge looked about him for the Ghost, and saw it not. the last stroke ceased to vibrate, he remembered the prediction old Jacob Marley, and lifting up his eyes, beheld a sole Phantom, draped and hooded, coming, like a mist along ground, towards him.

Stave Four.

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS.

THE Phantom slowly, gravely, silently approached. When came near him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee; for in the v air through which this Spirit moved it seemed to scatter glo and mystery.

It was shrouded in a deep black garment, which concealed head, its face, its form, and left nothing of it visible save outstretched hand. But for this it would have been difficult detach its figure from the night, and separate it from the darkn by which it was surrounded.

He felt that it was tall and stately when it came beside hi and that its mysterious presence filled him with a solemn dre He knew no more, for the Spirit neither spoke nor moved.

"I am in the presence of the Ghost of Christmas Yet Come?" said Scrooge.

The Spirit answered not, but pointed downward with its han

"You are about to show me shadows of the things that ha not happened, but will happen in the time before us," Scroo pursued. "Is that so, Spirit?"

The upper portion of the garment was contracted for an inst in its folds, as if the Spirit had inclined its head. That was t only answer he received.

Although well used to ghostly company by this time, Scroo feared the silent shape so much that his legs trembled beneat him, and he found that he could hardly stand when he prepar to follow it. The Spirit paused a moment, as observing condition, and giving him time to recover.

But Scrooge was all the worse for this. It thrilled him wi a vague uncertain horror, to know that behind the dusky shro there were ghostly eyes intently fixed upon him, while he, thou he stretched his own to the utmost, could see nothing but spectral hand and one great heap of black.

"Ghost of the Future!" he exclaimed, "I fear you more th

y Spectre I have seen. But, as I know your purpose is to do good, and as I hope to live to be another man from what I s, I am prepared to bear you company, and doit with a thankful rt. Will you not speak to me?"

It gave him no reply. The hand was pointed straight before m.

"Lead on!" said Scrooge. "Lead on! The night is waning t, and it is precious time to me, I know. Lead on, Spirit!"

The Phantom moved away as it had come towards him. rooge followed in the shadow of its dress, which bore him up, thought, and carried him along.

They scarcely seemed to enter the city; for the city rather med to spring up about them, and encompass them of its own . But there they were, in the heart of it; on 'Change, ongst the merchants; who hurried up and down, and chinked e money in their pockets, and conversed in groups, and looked their watches, and trifled thoughtfully with their great gold ls; and so forth, as Scrooge had seen them often.

The Spirit stopped beside one little knot of business men. serving that the hand was pointed to them, Scrooge advanced listen to their talk.

"No," said a great fat man with a monstrous chin, "I n't know much about it, either way. I only know he's dead."

"When did he die?" inquired another.

"Last night, I believe."

"Why, what was the matter with him?" asked a third, taking a t quantity of snuff out of a very large snuff-box. "I thought d never die."

"God knows," said the first, with a yawn.

"What has he done with his money?" asked a red-faced tleman with a pendulous excrescence on the end of his nose, t shook like the gills of a turkey-cock.

"I haven't heard," said the man with the large chin, rning again. "Left it to his Company, perhaps. He hasn't it to *me*. That's all I know."

This pleasantry was received with a general laugh.

"It's likely to be a very cheap funeral," said the same speaker; or upon my life I don't know of anybody to go to it. Suppose make up a party and volunteer?"

"I don't mind going if a lunch is provided," observed the tleman with the excrescence on his nose. "But I must be l, if I make one."

Another laugh.

"Well, I am the most disinterested among you, after all,"

said the first speaker, "for I never wear black gloves, and never eat lunch. But I'll offer to go, if anybody else wi When I come to think of it, I'm not at all sure that I was his most particular friend; for we used to stop and spe whenever we met. Bye, bye!"

Speakers and listeners strolled away, and mixed with oth groups. Scrooge knew the men, and looked towards the Spi for an explanation.

The Phantom glided on into a street. Its finger pointed two persons meeting. Scrooge listened again, thinking that t explanation might lie here.

He knew these men, also, perfectly. They were men business: very wealthy, and of great importance. He h made a point always of standing well in their esteem: in business point of view, that is; strictly in a business point view.

"How are you?" said one.

"How are you?" returned the other.

"Well!" said the first. "Old Scratch has got his own last, hey?"

"So I am told," returned the second. "Cold, isn't it?"

"Seasonable for Christmas time. You're not a skater, suppose?"

"No. No. Something else to think of. Good morning!"

Not another word. That was their meeting, their conver tion, and their parting.

Scrooge was at first inclined to be surprised that the Spi should attach importance to conversations apparently so trivi but feeling assured that they must have some hidden purpo he set himself to consider what it was likely to be. They co scarcely be supposed to have any bearing on the death of Jac his old partner, for that was Past, and this Ghost's province t the Future. Nor could he think of any one immediately c nected with himself, to whom he could apply them. But noth doubting that to whomsoever they applied they had some lat moral for his own improvement, he resolved to treasure up ev word he heard, and everything he saw; and especially observe the shadow of himself when it appeared. For he h an expectation that the conduct of his future self would g him the clue he missed, and would render the solution of th riddles easy.

He looked about in that very place for his own image; another man stood in his accustomed corner, and ough clock pointed to his usual time of day for being the mor saw

ness of himself among the multitudes that poured in through
e Porch. It gave him little surprise, however; for he had
en revolving in his mind a change of life, and thought and
ped he saw his new-born resolutions carried out in this.

Quiet and dark, beside him stood the Phantom, with its
stretched hand. When he roused himself from his thoughtful
est, he fancied from the turn of the hand, and its situation in
erence to himself, that the Unseen Eyes were looking at him
nly. It made him shudder, and feel very cold.

They left the busy scene, and went into an obscure part of
e town, where Scrooge had never penetrated before, although
recognised its situation, and its bad repute. The ways were
l and narrow; the shops and houses wretched; the people
lf-naked, drunken, slipshod, ugly. Alleys and archways, like
many cesspools, disgorged their offences of smell, and dirt,
l life, upon the straggling streets; and the whole quarter
ked with crime, with filth, and misery.

Far in this den of infamous resort, there was a low-browed,
tling shop, below a pent-house roof, where iron, old rags,
ttles, bones, and greasy offal, were bought. Upon the floor
thin, were piled up heaps of rusty keys, nails, chains, hinges,
s, scales, weights, and refuse iron of all kinds. Secrets that
would like to scrutinise were bred and hidden in mountains
unseemly rags, masses of corrupted fat, and sepulchres of bones.
ting in among the wares he dealt in, by a charcoal-stove,
de of old bricks, was a grey-haired rascal, nearly seventy years
age; who had screened himself from the cold air without, by
housy curtaining of miscellaneous tatters, hung upon a line;
l smoked his pipe in all the luxury of calm retirement.

Scrooge and the Phantom came into the presence of this
n, just as a woman with a heavy bundle slunk into the shop.
t she had scarcely entered, when another woman, similarly
en, came in too; and she was closely followed by a man in
d black, who was no less startled by the sight of them, than
y had been upon the recognition of each other. After a short
lod of blank astonishment, in which the old man with the
e had joined them, they all three burst into a laugh.

"Let the charwoman alone to be the first!" cried she who
entered first. "Let the laundress alone to be the second;
let the undertaker's man alone to be the third. Look here,
Joe, here's a chance! If we haven't all three met here
hout meaning it!"

"You couldn't have met in a better place," said old Joe,
oving his pipe from his mouth. "Come into the parlour.

You were made free of it long ago, you know; and the oth two an't strangers. Stop till I shut the door of the shop. Al How it skreeks! There an't such a rusty bit of metal in t place as its own hinges, I believe; and I'm sure there's no su old bones here, as mine. Ha, ha! We're all suitable to o calling, we're well matched. Come into the parlour. Come in the parlour."

The parlour was the space behind the screen of rags. T old man raked the fire together with an old stair-rod, and havi trimmed his smoky lamp (for it was night), with the stem of h pipe, put it in his mouth again.

While he did this, the woman who had already spoken thr her bundle on the floor, and sat down in a flaunting manner a stool; crossing her elbows on her knees, and looking with bold defiance at the other two.

"What odds then! What odds, Mrs. Dilber?" said t woman. "Every person has a right to take care of themselv *He* always did!"

"That's true, indeed!" said the laundress. "No man more s

"Why, then, don't stand staring as if you was afraid, woma who's the wiser? We're not going to pick holes in each othe coats, I suppose?"

"No, indeed!" said Mrs. Dilber and the man together. "W should hope not."

"Very well, then!" cried the woman. "That's enou Who's the worse for the loss of a few things like these? N a dead man, I suppose."

"No, indeed," said Mrs. Dilber, laughing.

"If he wanted to keep 'em after he was dead, a wicked screw," pursued the woman, "why wasn't he natural in lifetime? If he had been, he'd have had somebody to look af him when he was struck with Death, instead of lying gasping o his last there, alone by himself."

"It's the truest word that ever was spoke," said Mrs. Dilb "It's a judgment on him."

"I wish it was a little heavier one," replied the woman; "a it should have been, you may depend upon it, if I could have l my hands on anything else. Open that bundle, old Joe, and me know the value of it. Speak out plain. I'm not afraid to the first, nor afraid for them to see it. We knew pretty w that we were helping ourselves, before we met here, I belie It's no sin. Open the bundle, Joe."

But the gallantry of her friends would not allow of this; a the man in faded black, mounting the breach first, produced

plunder. It was not extensive. A seal or two, a pencil-case, a pair of sleeve-buttons, and a brooch of no great value, were all. They were severally examined and appraised by old Joe, who chalked the sums he was disposed to give for each, upon the wall, and added them up into a total when he found there was nothing more to come.

"That's your account," said Joe, "and I wouldn't give another sixpence, if I was to be boiled for not doing it. Who's next?"

Mrs. Dilber was next. Sheets and towels, a little wearing apparel, two old-fashioned silver teaspoons, a pair of sugar-tongs, and a few boots. Her account was stated on the wall in the same manner.

"I always give too much to ladies. It's a weakness of mine, and that's the way I ruin myself," said old Joe. "That's your account. If you asked me for another penny, and made it an open question, I'd repent of being so liberal and knock off half-a-crown."

"And now undo *my* bundle, Joe," said the first woman.

Joe went down on his knees for the greater convenience of opening it, and having unfastened a great many knots, dragged out a large and heavy roll of some dark stuff.

"What do you call this?" said Joe. "Bed-curtains!"

"Ah!" returned the woman, laughing and leaning forward on her crossed arms. "Bed-curtains!"

"You don't mean to say you took 'em down, rings and all, with him lying there?" said Joe.

"Yes I do," replied the woman. "Why not?"

"You were born to make your fortune," said Joe, "and you'll certainly do it."

"I certainly shan't hold my hand, when I can get anything in it by reaching it out, for the sake of such a man as He was, I promise you, Joe," returned the woman coolly. "Don't drop that oil upon the blankets, now."

"His blankets?" asked Joe.

"Whose else's do you think?" replied the woman. "He isn't likely to take cold without 'em, I dare say."

"I hope he didn't die of anything catching? Eh?" said old Joe, stopping in his work, and looking up.

"Don't you be afraid of that," returned the woman. "I an't so fond of his company that I'd loiter about him for such things, if he did. Ah! you may look through that shirt till your eyes ache; but you won't find a hole in it, nor a threadbare place. It's the best he had, and a fine one too. They'd have wasted it, if it hadn't been for me."

"What do you call wasting of it?" asked old Joe.

"Putting it on him to be buried in, to be sure," replied th woman with a laugh. "Somebody was fool enough to do it, bu I took it off again. If calico an't good enough for such a purpos it isn't good enough for anything. It's quite as becoming to th body. He can't look uglier than he did in that one."

Scrooge listened to this dialogue in horror. As they sa grouped about their spoil, in the scanty light afforded by the ol man's lamp, he viewed them with a detestation and disgust, whic could hardly have been greater, though they had been obscen demons, marketing the corpse itself.

"Ha, ha!" laughed the same woman, when old Joe, producin a flannel bag with money in it, told out their several gains upo the ground. "This is the end of it, you see! He frightene every one away from him when he was alive, to profit us when h was dead! Ha, ha, ha!"

"Spirit!" said Scrooge, shuddering from head to foot. " see, I see. The case of this unhappy man might be my ow My life tends that way, now. Merciful Heaven, what is this!"

He recoiled in terror, for the scene had changed, and now h almost touched a bed: a bare, uncurtained bed: on which, beneat a ragged sheet, there lay a something covered up, which, thoug it was dumb, announced itself in awful language.

The room was very dark, too dark to be observed with an accuracy, though Scrooge glanced round it in obedience to a secr impulse, anxious to know what kind of room it was. A pale ligh rising in the outer air, fell straight upon the bed; and on i plundered and bereft, unwatched, unwept, uncared for, was th body of this man.

Scrooge glanced towards the Phantom. Its steady hand w pointed to the head. The cover was so carelessly adjusted tha the slightest raising of it, the motion of a finger upon Scrooge part, would have disclosed the face. He thought of it, felt ho easy it would be to do, and longed to do it; but had no mo power to withdraw the veil than to dismiss the spectre at h side.

Oh cold, cold, rigid, dreadful Death, set up thine altar her and dress it with such terrors as thou hast at thy command: f this is thy dominion! But of the loved, revered, and honoure head, thou canst not turn one hair to thy dread purposes, or mak one feature odious. It is not that the hand is heavy and will fa down when released; it is not that the heart and pulse are still but that the hand WAS open, generous, and true; the heart brav warm, and tender; and the pulse a man's. Strike, Shadow

trike! And see his good deeds springing from the wound, to ow the world with life immortal!

No voice pronounced these words in Scrooge's ears, and yet he eard them when he looked upon the bed. He thought, if this an could be raised up now, what would be his foremost thoughts? varice, hard dealing, griping cares? They have brought him to rich end, truly!

He lay, in the dark empty house, with not a man, a woman, or child, to say that he was kind to me in this or that, and for the emory of one kind word I will be kind to him. A cat was earing at the door, and there was a sound of gnawing rats beneath he hearth-stone. What *they* wanted in the room of death, and hy they were so restless and disturbed, Scrooge did not dare to hink.

"Spirit!" he said, "this is a fearful place. In leaving it, I hall not leave its lesson, trust me. Let us go!"

Still the Ghost pointed with an unmoved finger to the head.

"I understand you," Scrooge returned, "and I would do it, if I could. But I have not the power, Spirit. I have not the power."

Again it seemed to look upon him.

"If there is any person in the town, who feels emotion caused by this man's death," said Scrooge quite agonized, "show that person to me, Spirit, I beseech you!"

The Phantom spread its dark robe before him for a moment, like a wing; and withdrawing it, revealed a room by daylight, where a mother and her children were.

She was expecting some one, and with anxious eagerness; for he walked up and down the room; started at every sound; looked ut from the window; glanced at the clock; tried, but in vain, to ork with her needle; and could hardly bear the voices of the hildren in their play.

At length the long-expected knock was heard. She hurried to he door, and met her husband; a man whose face was careworn nd depressed, though he was young. There was a remarkable xpression in it now; a kind of serious delight of which he felt shamed, and which he struggled to repress.

He sat down to the dinner that had been hoarding for him by he fire; and when she asked him faintly what news (which was ot until after a long silence), he appeared embarrassed how to nswer.

"Is it good," she said, "or bad?"—to help him.

"Bad," he answered.

"We are quite ruined?"

"No. There is hope yet, Caroline."

"If *he* relents," she said, amazed, "there is! Nothing is past hope, if such a miracle has happened."

"He is past relenting," said her husband. "He is dead."

She was a mild and patient creature if her face spoke truth; but she was thankful in her soul to hear it, and she said so, with clasped hands. She prayed forgiveness the next moment, and was sorry; but the first was the emotion of her heart.

"What the half-drunken woman whom I told you of last night, said to me, when I tried to see him and obtain a week's delay; and what I thought was a mere excuse to avoid me; turns out to have been quite true. He was not only very ill, but dying, then."

"To whom will our debt be transferred?"

"I don't know. But before that time we shall be ready with the money; and even though we were not, it would be bad fortune indeed to find so merciless a creditor in his successor. We may sleep to-night with light hearts, Caroline!"

Yes. Soften it as they would, their hearts were lighter. The children's faces, hushed, and clustered round to hear what they so little understood, were brighter; and it was a happier house for this man's death! The only emotion that the Ghost could show him, caused by the event, was one of pleasure.

"Let me see some tenderness connected with a death," said Scrooge; "or that dark chamber, Spirit, which we left just now, will be for ever present to me."

The Ghost conducted him through several streets familiar to his feet; and as they went along, Scrooge looked here and there to find himself, but nowhere was he to be seen. They entered poor Bob Cratchit's house; the dwelling he had visited before; and found the mother and the children seated round the fire.

Quiet. Very quiet. The noisy little Cratchits were as still as statues in one corner, and sat looking up at Peter, who had a book before him. The mother and her daughters were engaged in sewing. But surely they were very quiet!

"'And He took a child, and set him in the midst of them.'"

Where had Scrooge heard those words? He had not dreamed them. The boy must have read them out, as he and the Spirit crossed the threshold. Why did he not go on?

The mother laid her work upon the table, and put her hand up to her face.

"The colour hurts my eyes," she said.

The colour? Ah, poor Tiny Tim!

"They're better now again," said Cratchit's wife. "It makes them weak by candlelight; and I wouldn't show weak eyes to your

her when he comes home, for the world. It must be near his
ne."

"Past it rather," Peter answered, shutting up his book. "But
think he's walked a little slower than he used, these few last
enings, mother."

They were very quiet again. At last she said, and in a steady
erful voice, that only faltered once:

"I have known him walk with—I have known him walk with
ny Tim upon his shoulder, very fast indeed."

"And so have I," cried Peter. "Often."

"And so have I," exclaimed another. So had all.

"But he was very light to carry," she resumed, intent upon her
rk, "and his father loved him so, that it was no trouble—no
uble. And there is your father at the door!"

She hurried out to meet him; and little Bob in his comforter
he had need of it, poor fellow—came in. His tea was ready for
m on the hob, and they all tried who should help him to it most.
en the two young Cratchits got upon his knees and laid, each
ild a little cheek, against his face, as if they said, "Don't mind
father. Don't be grieved!"

Bob was very cheerful with them, and spoke pleasantly to all
e family. He looked at the work upon the table, and praised
e industry and speed of Mrs. Cratchit and the girls. They would
done long before Sunday he said.

"Sunday! You went to-day then, Robert?" said his wife.

"Yes, my dear," returned Bob. "I wish you could have gone.
would have done you good to see how green a place it is. But
u'll see it often. I promised him that I would walk there on a
nday. My little, little child!" cried Bob. "My little child!"

He broke down all at once. He couldn't help it. If he could
ve helped it, he and his child would have been farther apart
rhaps than they were.

He left the room, and went up stairs into the room above, which
s lighted cheerfully, and hung with Christmas. There was a
air set close beside the child, and there were signs of some one
ving been there, lately. Poor Bob sat down in it, and when he
d thought a little and composed himself, he kissed the little face.
e was reconciled to what had happened, and went down again
ite happy.

They drew about the fire, and talked; the girls and mother
rking still. Bob told them of the extraordinary kindness of
r. Scrooge's nephew, whom he had scarcely seen but once, and
ho, meeting him in the street that day, and seeing that he looked
little—"just a little down you know," said Bob, inquired what

had happened to distress him. "On which," said Bob, "for he the pleasantest-spoken gentleman you ever heard, I told him. am heartily sorry for it, Mr. Cratchit,' he said, 'and heartily so for your good wife.' By the bye, how he ever knew *that*, I do know."

"Knew what, my dear?"

"Why, that you were a good wife," replied Bob.

"Everybody knows that!" said Peter.

"Very well observed, my boy!" cried Bob. "I hope they 'Heartily sorry,' he said, 'for your good wife. If I can be service to you in any way,' he said, giving me his card, 'th where I live. Pray come to me.' Now, it wasn't," cried B "for the sake of anything he might be able to do for us, so m as for his kind way, that this was quite delightful. It re seemed as if he had known our Tiny Tim, and felt with us."

"I'm sure he's a good soul!" said Mrs. Cratchit.

"You would be surer of it, my dear," returned Bob, "if saw and spoke to him. I shouldn't be at all surprised, mark w I say, if he got Peter a better situation."

"Only hear that, Peter," said Mrs. Cratchit.

"And then," cried one of the girls, "Peter will be keep company with some one, and setting up for himself."

"Get along with you!" retorted Peter, grinning.

"It's just as likely as not," said Bob, "one of these da though there's plenty of time for that, my dear. But howe and whenever we part from one another, I am sure we shall n of us forget poor Tiny Tim—shall we—or this first parting t there was among us?"

"Never, father!" cried they all.

"And I know," said Bob, "I know, my dears, that when recollect how patient and how mild he was; although he wa little, little child; we shall not quarrel easily among ourselves, forget poor Tiny Tim in doing it."

"No, never, father!" they all cried again.

"I am very happy," said little Bob, "I am very happy!"

Mrs. Cratchit kissed him, his daughters kissed him, the young Cratchits kissed him, and Peter and himself shook ha Spirit of Tiny Tim, thy childish essence was from God!

"Spectre," said Scrooge, "something informs me that parting moment is at hand. I know it, but I know not h Tell me what man that was whom we saw lying dead?"

The Ghost of Christmas Yet To Come conveyed him, as be —though at a different time, he thought: indeed, there seeme order in these latter visions, save that they were in the Futu

to the resorts of business men, but showed him not himself. Indeed, the Spirit did not stay for anything, but went straight on, as to the end just now desired, until besought by Scrooge to tarry for a moment.

"This court," said Scrooge, "through which we hurry now, is where my place of occupation is, and has been for a length of time. I see the house. Let me behold what I shall be, in days to come!"

The Spirit stopped; the hand was pointed elsewhere.

"The house is yonder," Scrooge exclaimed. "Why do you point away?"

The inexorable finger underwent no change.

Scrooge hastened to the window of his office, and looked in. It was an office still, but not his. The furniture was not the same, and the figure in the chair was not himself. The Phantom pointed as before.

He joined it once again, and wondering why and whither he had gone, accompanied it until they reached an iron gate. He paused to look round before entering.

A churchyard. Here, then, the wretched man whose name he had now to learn, lay underneath the ground. It was a worthy place. Walled in by houses; overrun by grass and weeds, the growth of vegetation's death, not life; choked up with too much burying; fat with repleted appetite. A worthy place!

The Spirit stood among the graves, and pointed down to One. He advanced towards it trembling. The Phantom was exactly as it had been, but he dreaded that he saw new meaning in its solemn shape.

"Before I draw nearer to that stone to which you point," said Scrooge, "answer me one question. Are these the shadows of the things that Will be, or are they shadows of things that May be, only?"

Still the Ghost pointed downward to the grave by which it stood.

"Men's courses will foreshadow certain ends, to which, if persevered in, they must lead," said Scrooge. "But if the courses be departed from, the ends will change. Say it is thus with what you show me!"

The Spirit was immovable as ever.

Scrooge crept towards it, trembling as he went; and following the finger, read upon the stone of the neglected grave his own name, EBENEZER SCROOGE.

"Am *I* that man who lay upon the bed?" he cried, upon his knees.

The finger pointed from the grave to him, and back again.

"No, Spirit! Oh no, no!"

The finger still was there.

"Spirit!" he cried, tight clutching at its robe, "hear me! I am not the man I was. I will not be the man I must have be

THE LAST OF THE SPIRITS.

but for this intercourse. Why show me this, if I am past hope!"

For the first time the hand appeared to shake.

"Good Spirit," he pursued, as down upon the ground he fell before it: "Your nature intercedes for me, and pities me. Assu

that I yet may change these shadows you have shown me, by altered life!"

The kind hand trembled.

"I will honour Christmas in my heart, and try to keep it all the year. I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future. The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. I will not shut out the lessons that they teach. Oh, tell me I may sponge away the writing on this stone!"

In his agony, he caught the spectral hand. It sought to free itself, but he was strong in his entreaty, and detained it. The Spirit, stronger yet, repulsed him.

Holding up his hands in one last prayer to have his fate reversed, he saw an alteration in the Phantom's hood and dress. It shrank, collapsed, and dwindled down into a bedpost.

Stave Five.

THE END OF IT.

YES! and the bedpost was his own. The bed was his own, the room was his own. Best and happiest of all, the Time before him was his own, to make amends in!

"I will live in the Past, the Present, and the Future!" Scrooge repeated, as he scrambled out of bed. "The Spirits of all Three shall strive within me. Oh Jacob Marley! Heaven, and the Christmas Time be praised for this! I say it on my knees, old Jacob, on my knees!"

He was so fluttered and so glowing with his good intentions, that his broken voice would scarcely answer to his call. He had been sobbing violently in his conflict with the Spirit, and his face was wet with tears.

"They are not torn down," cried Scrooge, folding one of his bed-curtains in his arms, "they are not torn down, rings and all. They are here: I am here: the shadows of the things that would have been, may be dispelled. They will be. I know they will!"

His hands were busy with his garments all this time: turning them inside out, putting them on upside down, tearing them, misplacing them, making them parties to every kind of extravagance.

"I don't know what to do!" cried Scrooge, laughing and crying in the same breath; and making a perfect Laocoön of himself with his stockings. "I am as light as a feather, I am as happy as an angel, I am as merry as a schoolboy. I am as giddy as a

drunken man. A Merry Christmas to everybody! A Hap
New Year to all the world. Hallo here! Whoop! Hallo!"

He had frisked into the sitting-room, and was now standi
there: perfectly winded.

"There's the saucepan that the gruel was in!" cried Scroo
starting off again, and frisking round the fireplace. "There's t
door, by which the Ghost of Jacob Marley entered! There's t
corner where the Ghost of Christmas Present sat! There's t
window where I saw the wandering Spirits! It's all right, it's
true, it all happened. Ha, ha, ha!"

Really, for a man who had been out of practice for so ma
years, it was a splendid laugh, a most illustrious laugh. T
father of a long, long line of brilliant laughs!

"I don't know what day of the month it is!" said Scroo
"I don't know how long I've been among the Spirits. I do
know anything. I'm quite a baby. Never mind. I don't ca
I'd rather be a baby. Hallo! Whoop! Hallo here!"

He was checked in his transports by the churches ringing
the lustiest peals he had ever heard. Clash, clang, hammer, di
dong, bell. Bell, dong, ding, hammer, clang, clash! Oh, glorio
glorious!

Running to the window, he opened it, and put out his he
No fog, no mist; clear, bright, jovial, stirring, cold; cold, pipi
for the blood to dance to; golden sunlight; heavenly sky; swe
fresh air; merry bells. Oh, glorious. Glorious!

"What's to-day?" cried Scrooge, calling downward to a b
in Sunday clothes, who perhaps had loitered in to look about hi

"EH?" returned the boy, with all his might of wonder.

"What's to-day, my fine fellow?" said Scrooge.

"To-day!" replied the boy. "Why, CHRISTMAS DAY."

"It's Christmas Day!" said Scrooge to himself. "I have
missed it. The Spirits have done it all in one night. They c
do anything they like. Of course they can. Of course they c
Hallo, my fine fellow!"

"Hallo!" returned the boy.

"Do you know the Poulterer's, in the next street but one,
the corner?" Scrooge inquired.

"I should hope I did," replied the lad.

"An intelligent boy!" said Scrooge. "A remarkable bo
Do you know whether they've sold the prize Turkey that w
hanging up there? Not the little prize Turkey: the big one?"

"What, the one as big as me?" returned the boy.

"What a delightful boy!" said Scrooge. "It's a pleasure
talk to him. Yes, my buck!"

"It's hanging there now," replied the boy.

"Is it?" said Scrooge. "Go and buy it."

"Walk-ER!" exclaimed the boy.

"No, no," said Scrooge, "I am in earnest. Go and buy it, nd tell 'em to bring it here, that I may give them the direction here to take it. Come back with the man, and I'll give you a hilling. Come back with him in less than five minutes, and I'll ive you half-a-crown!"

The boy was off like a shot. He must have had a steady hand t a trigger who could have got a shot off half so fast.

"I'll send it to Bob Cratchit's!" whispered Scrooge, rubbing is hands, and splitting with a laugh. "He shan't know who ends it. It's twice the size of Tiny Tim. Joe Miller never ade such a joke as sending it to Bob's will be!"

The hand in which he wrote the address was not a steady one, ut write it he did, somehow, and went down stairs to open the reet door, ready for the coming of the poulterer's man. As he ood there, waiting his arrival, the knocker caught his eye.

"I shall love it, as long as I live!" cried Scrooge, patting it ith his hand. "I scarcely ever looked at it before. What an onest expression it has in its face! It's a wonderful knocker! -Here's the Turkey. Hallo! Whoop! How are you! Merry hristmas!"

It *was* a Turkey! He could never have stood upon his legs, hat bird. He would have snapped 'em short off in a minute, like icks of sealing-wax.

"Why, it's impossible to carry that to Camden Town," said crooge. "You must have a cab."

The chuckle with which he said this, and the chuckle with hich he paid for the turkey, and the chuckle with which he paid r the cab, and the chuckle with which he recompensed the boy, ere only to be exceeded by the chuckle with which he sat down reathless in his chair again, and chuckled till he cried.

Shaving was not an easy task, for his hand continued to shake ery much; and shaving requires attention, even when you don't nce while you are at it. But if he had cut the end of his nose f, he would have put a piece of sticking-plaster over it, and been uite satisfied.

He dressed himself "all in his best," and at last got out into e streets. The people were by this time pouring forth, as he d seen them with the Ghost of Christmas Present; and walking ith his hands behind him, Scrooge regarded everyone with a lighted smile. He looked so irresistibly pleasant, in a word, that hree or four good-humoured fellows said, "Good morning, Sir!

A Merry Christmas to you!" And Scrooge said often afterwar that of all the blithe sounds he had ever heard, those were t blithest in his ears.

He had not gone far, when coming on towards him he beh the portly gentleman, who had walked into his counting-house t day before and said, "Scrooge and Marley's, I believe?" It sen pang across his heart to think how this old gentleman would lo upon him when they met; but he knew what path lay straig before him, and he took it.

"My dear Sir," said Scrooge, quickening his pace, and taki the old gentleman by both his hands. "How do you do? I ho you succeeded yesterday. It was very kind of you. A Me Christmas to you, Sir!"

"Mr. Scrooge?"

"Yes," said Scrooge. "That is my name, and I fear it m not be pleasant to you. Allow me to ask your pardon. A will you have the goodness"—here Scrooge whispered in ear.

"Lord bless me!" cried the gentleman, as if his breath w gone. "My dear Mr. Scrooge, are you serious?"

"If you please," said Scrooge. "Not a farthing less. A gr many back-payments are included in it, I assure you. Will y do me that favour?"

"My dear Sir," said the other, shaking hands with him. don't know what to say to such munifi——"

"Don't say anything, please," retorted Scrooge. "Come a see me. Will you come and see me?"

"I will!" cried the old gentleman. And it was clear he me to do it.

"Thank'ee," said Scrooge. "I am much obliged to you. thank you fifty times. Bless you!"

He went to church, and walked about the streets, and watch the people hurrying to and fro, and patted children on the he and questioned beggars, and looked down into the kitchens houses, and up to the windows; and found that everything co yield him pleasure. He had never dreamed that any walk—t anything—could give him so much happiness. In the afterno he turned his steps towards his nephew's house.

He passed the door a dozen times, before he had the courage go up and knock. But he made a dash, and did it:

"Is your master at home, my dear?" said Scrooge to the g Nice girl! Very.

"Yes, Sir."

"Where is he, my love?" said Scrooge.

"He's in the dining-room, Sir, along with mistress. I'll show ou up stairs, if you please."

"Thank'ee. He knows me," said Scrooge, with his hand already n the dining-room lock. "I'll go in here, my dear."

He turned it gently, and sidled his face in, round the door. hey were looking at the table (which was spread out in great rray); for these young housekeepers are always nervous on such oints, and like to see that everything is right.

"Fred!" said Scrooge.

Dear heart alive, how his niece by marriage started! Scrooge ad forgotten, for the moment, about her sitting in the corner with he footstool, or he wouldn't have done it, on any account.

"Why bless my soul!" cried Fred, "who's that?"

"It's I. Your uncle Scrooge. I have come to dinner. Will ou let me in, Fred?"

Let him in! It is a mercy he didn't shake his arm off. He as at home in five minutes. Nothing could be heartier. His iece looked just the same. So did Topper when *he* came. So did he plump sister, when *she* came. So did everyone when *they* came. Wonderful party, wonderful games, wonderful unanimity, won-der-ul happiness!

But he was early at the office next morning. Oh he was early here. If he could only be there first, and catch Bob Cratchit oming late! That was the thing he had set his heart upon.

And he did it; yes he did! The clock struck nine. No Bob. A quarter past. No Bob. He was full eighteen minutes and a alf behind his time. Scrooge sat with his door wide open, that e might see him come into the Tank.

His hat was off, before he opened the door; his comforter too. He was on his stool in a jiffy; driving away with his pen, as if he ere trying to overtake nine o'clock.

"Hallo!" growled Scrooge, in his accustomed voice as near as e could feign it. "What do you mean by coming here at this ime of day?"

"I am very sorry, Sir," said Bob. "I *am* behind my ime."

"You are?" repeated Scrooge. "Yes. I think you are. tep this way, Sir, if you please."

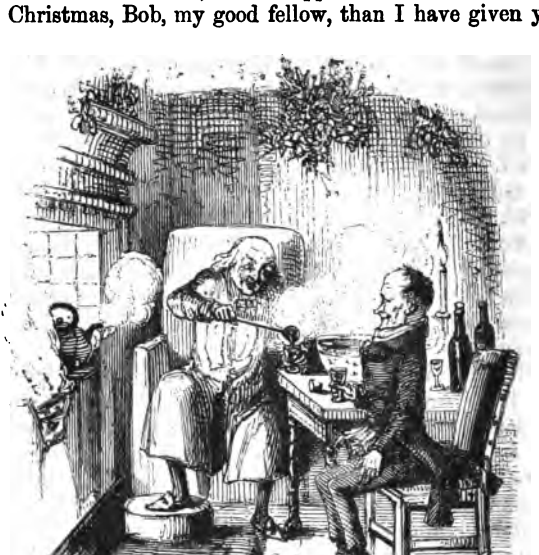
"It's only once a year, Sir," pleaded Bob, appearing from the ank. "It shall not be repeated. I was making rather merry esterday, Sir."

"Now, I'll tell you what, my friend," said Scrooge, "I am not oing to stand this sort of thing any longer. And therefore," he ontinued, leaping from his stool, and giving Bob such a dig in the

waistcoat that he staggered back into the Tank again: "and there fore I am about to raise your salary!"

Bob trembled, and got a little nearer to the ruler. He had momentary idea of knocking Scrooge down with it; holding him and calling to the people in the court for help and a strait-waistcoat

"A Merry Christmas, Bob!" said Scrooge, with an earnestnes that could not be mistaken, as he clapped him on the back. "A merrier Christmas, Bob, my good fellow, than I have given you fo



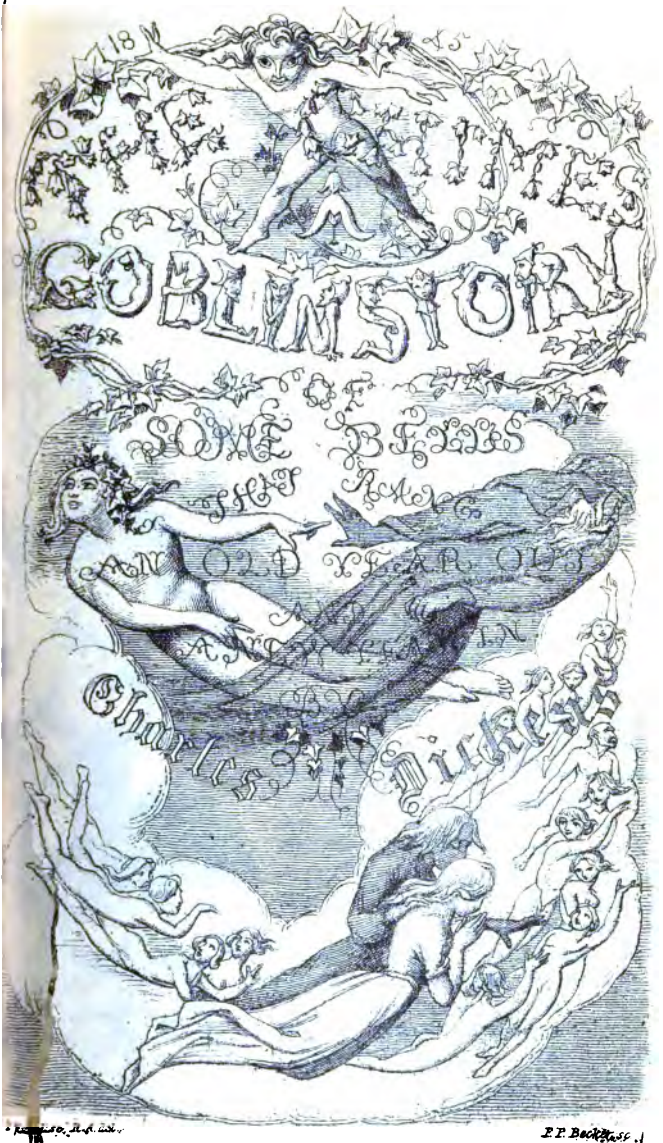
many a year! I'll raise your salary, and endeavour to assist you struggling family, and we will discuss your affairs this very afte noon, over a Christmas bowl of smoking bishop, Bob! Make u the fires, and buy another coal-scuttle before you dot another Bob Cratchit!"

Scrooge was better than his word. He did it all, and infinite more; and to Tiny Tim, who did NOT die, he was a second fathe He became as good a friend, as good a master, and as good a ma as the good old city knew, or any other good old city, town,

orough, in the good old world. Some people laughed to see the lteration in him, but he let them laugh, and little heeded them; or he was wise enough to know that nothing ever happened on his globe, for good, at which some people did not have their fill f laughter in the outset; and knowing that such as these would e blind anyway, he thought it quite as well that they should rinkle up their eyes in grins, as have the malady in less attractive orms. His own heart laughed: and that was quite enough for im.

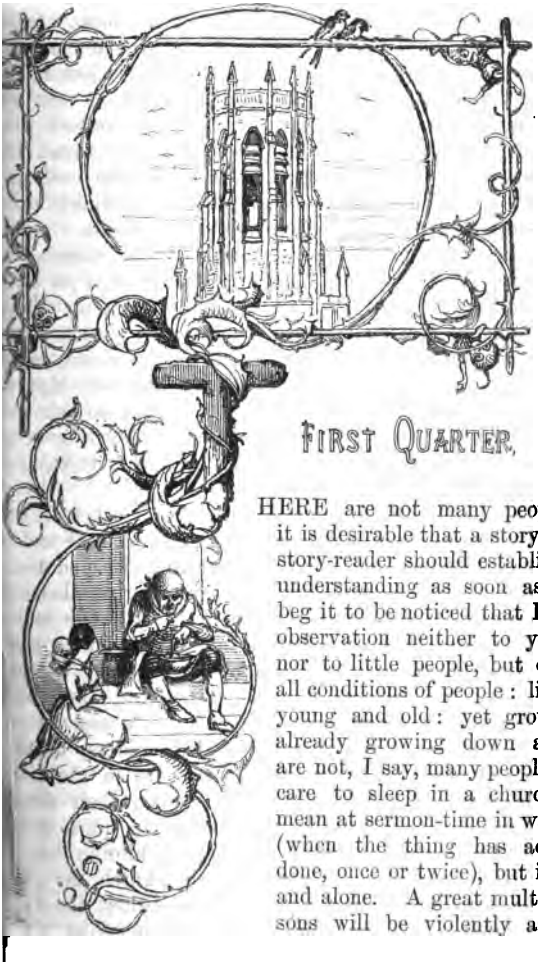
He had no further intercourse with Spirits, but lived upon the otal Abstinence Principle, ever afterwards; and it was always aid of him, that he knew how to keep Christmas well, if any man live possessed the knowledge. May that be truly said of us, and ll of us! And so, as Tiny Tim observed, God Bless Us, Every ne!

THE TOWER OF THE CHIMES.



THE SPIRIT OF THE CHIMES.

THE CHIMES.



First Quarter.

HERE are not many people—and as it is desirable that a story-teller and a story-reader should establish a mutual understanding as soon as possible, I beg it to be noticed that I confine this observation neither to young people nor to little people, but extend it to all conditions of people: little and big, young and old: yet growing up, or already growing down again—there are not, I say, many people who would care to sleep in a church. I don't mean at sermon-time in warm weather (when the thing has actually been done, once or twice), but in the night, and alone. A great multitude of persons will be violently astonished, I

know, by this position, in the broad bold Day. But it applie to Night. It must be argued by night. And I will undertak to maintain it successfully on any gusty winter's night appointe for the purpose, with any one opponent chosen from the res who will meet me singly in an old churchyard, before an ol church door; and will previously empower me to lock him in, needful to his satisfaction, until morning.

For the night-wind has a dismal trick of wandering round an round a building of that sort, and moaning as it goes; and trying, with its unseen hand, the windows and the doors; an seeking out some crevices by which to enter. And when it ha got in; as one not finding what it seeks, whatever that may be it wails and howls to issue forth again: and not content wit stalking through the aisles, and gliding round and round th pillars, and tempting the deep organ, soars up to the roof, an strives to rend the rafters: then flings itself despairingly upo the stones below, and passes, muttering, into the vaults. Ano it comes up stealthily, and creeps along the walls: seeming t read, in whispers, the Inscriptions sacred to the Dead. At son of these, it breaks out shrilly, as with laughter; and at other moans and cries as if it were lamenting. It has a ghostly sour too, lingering within the altar; where it seems to chant, in i wild way, of Wrong and Murder done, and false Gods worshipped in defiance of the Tables of the Law, which look so fair an smooth, but are so flawed and broken. Ugh! Heaven preser us, sitting snugly round the fire! It has an awful voice, th wind at Midnight, singing in a church!

But high up in the steeple! There the foul blast roars an whistles! High up in the steeple, where it is free to come and through many an airy arch and loophole, and to twist and twi itself about the giddy stair, and twirl the groaning weathercoc and make the very tower shake and shiver! High up in t steeple, where the belfry is; and iron rails are ragged with rus and sheets of lead and copper, shrivelled by the changing weath crackle and heave beneath the unaccustomed tread; and bir stuff shabby nests into corners of old oaken joists and beam and dust grows old and grey; and speckled spiders, indole and fat with long security, swing idly to and fro in the vib tion of the bells, and never loose their hold upon their thres spun castles in the air, or climb up sailor-like in quick alar or drop upon the ground and ply a score of nimble legs save a life! High up in the steeple of an old church, far abo the light and murmur of the town and far below the flyi clouds that shadow it, is the wild and dreary place at nigh

ul high up in the steeple of an old church, dwelt the Chimes tell of.

They were old Chimes, trust me. Centuries ago, these Bells d been baptized by bishops: so many centuries ago, that the gister of their baptism was lost long, long before the memory of an: and no one knew their names. They had had their God-thers and Godmothers, these Bells (for my own part, by the ay, I would rather incur the responsibility of being Godfather to Bell than a Boy): and had their silver mugs no doubt, besides. ut Time had mowed down their sponsors, and Henry the Eighth d melted down their mugs: and they now hung, nameless and ugless, in the church tower.

Not speechless, though. Far from it. They had clear, loud, sty, sounding voices, had these Bells; and far and wide they ight be heard upon the wind. Much too sturdy Chimes were they, be dependent on the pleasure of the wind, moreover; for, fighting llantly against it when it took an adverse whim, they would ur their cheerful notes into a listening ear right royally; and at on being heard, on stormy nights, by some poor mother atching a sick child, or some lone wife whose husband was at , they had been sometimes known to beat a blustering Nor'-ester; ay, "all to fits," as Toby Veck said; for though they ose to call him Trotty Veck, his name was Toby, and nobody uld make it anything else either (except Tobias) without a ecial Act of Parliament; he having been as lawfully christened his day as the Bells had been in theirs, though with not quite much of solemnity or public rejoicing.

For my part, I confess myself of Toby Veck's belief, for I am re he had opportunities enough of forming a correct one. And atever Toby Veck said, I say. And I take my stand by Toby ck, although he *did* stand all day long (and weary work it was) t outside the church-door. In fact he was a ticket-porter, Toby ck, and waited there for jobs.

And a breezy, goose-skinned, blue-nosed, red-eyed, stony-toed, th-chattering place it was, to wait in, in the winter-time, as by Veck well knew. The wind came tearing round the corner especially the east wind—as if it had sallied forth, express, m the confines of the earth, to have a blow at Toby. And ntimes it seemed to come upon him sooner than it had pected, for bouncing round the corner, and passing Toby, it uld suddenly wheel round again, as if it cried "Why, here he !" Incontinently his little white apron would be caught up r his head like a naughty boy's garments, and his feeble little e would be seen to wrestle and struggle unavailingly in his

hand, and his legs would undergo tremendous agitation, and To himself all aslant, and facing now in this direction, now in th would be so banged and buffeted, and touzled, and worried, a hustled, and lifted off his feet, as to render it a state of things b one degree removed from a positive miracle, that he wasn't carri up bodily into the air as a colony of frogs or snails or other v

portable creatures sometimes are, and rained down again, to th great astonishment of the natives, on some strange corner of th world where ticket-porters are unknown.

But, windy weather, in spite of its using him so roughly, wa after all, a sort of holiday for Toby. That's the fact. He didn seem to wait so long for a sixpence in the wind, as at other times

having to fight with that boisterous element took off his
ention, and quite freshened him up, when he was getting hungry
l low-spirited. A hard frost too, or a fall of snow, was an
ent; and it seemed to do him good, somehow or other—it would
e been hard to say in what respect though, Toby! So wind and
t and snow, and perhaps a good stiff storm of hail, were Toby
k's red-letter days.

Wet weather was the worst: the cold, damp, clammy wet, that
pped him up like a moist great-coat: the only kind of great-
t Toby owned, or could have added to his comfort by dispensing
h. Wet days, when the rain came slowly, thickly, obstinately
n; when the street's throat, like his own, was choked with
t; when smoking umbrellas passed and repassed, spinning round
l round like so many teetotums, as they knocked against each
er on the crowded footway, throwing off a little whirlpool of
mfortable sprinklings; when gutters brawled and waterspouts
e full and noisy; when the wet from the projecting stones and
es of the church fell drip, drip, drip, on Toby, making the wisp
straw on which he stood mere mud in no time; those were the
s that tried him. Then indeed, you might see Toby looking
iously out from his shelter in an angle of the church wall—such
meagre shelter that in summer time it never cast a shadow
ker than a good-sized walking stick upon the sunny pavement
with a disconsolate and lengthened face. But coming out, a
nute afterwards, to warm himself by exercise: and trotting up
l down some dozen times: he would brighten even then, and
back more brightly to his niche.

They called him Trotty from his pace, which meant speed if it
n't make it. He could have Walked faster perhaps; most
dy; but rob him of his trot, and Toby would have taken to
bed and died. It bespattered him with mud in dirty weather;
nt him a world of trouble; he could have walked with infinitely
ter ease; but that was one reason for his clinging to it so
iously. A weak, small, spare old man, he was a very
rules, this Toby, in his good intentions. He loved to earn
money. He delighted to believe—Toby was very poor, and
dn't well afford to part with a delight—that he was worth his
With a shilling or an eighteen-penny message or small
el in hand, his courage, always high, rose higher. As he
ed on, he would call out to fast Postmen ahead of him, to get
of the way; devoutly believing that in the natural course of
gs he must inevitably overtake and run them down; and he
perfect faith—not often tested—in his being able to carry
thing that man could lift.

Thus, even when he came out of his nook to warm himself
wet day, Toby trotted. Making, with his leaky shoes, a croo
line of slushy footprints in the mire; and blowing on his ch
hands and rubbing them against each other, poorly defended f
the searching cold by threadbare mufflers of grey worsted, wit
private apartment only for the thumb, and a common room or
for the rest of the fingers; Toby, with his knees bent and
cane beneath his arm, still trotted. Falling out into the roa
look up at the belfry when the Chimes resounded, Toby tro
still.

He made this last excursion several times a day, for they w
company to him; and when he heard their voices, he had
interest in glancing at their lodging-place, and thinking how t
were moved, and what hammers beat upon them. Perhaps
was the more curious about these Bells, because there were po
of resemblance between themselves and him. They hung there
all weathers: with the wind and rain driving in upon the
facing only the outsides of all those houses; never getting
nearer to the blazing fires that gleamed and shone upon
windows, or came puffing out of the chimney tops; and incapa
of participation in any of the good things that were constan
being handed, through the street doors and the area railings,
prodigious cooks. Faces came and went at many windo
sometimes pretty faces, youthful faces, pleasant faces: someti
the reverse: but Toby knew no more (though he often specula
on these trifles, standing idle in the streets) whence they came,
where they went, or whether, when the lips moved, one kind w
was said of him in all the year, than did the Chimes themselve

Toby was not a casuist—that he knew of, at least—and I d
mean to say that when he began to take to the Bells, and to k
up his first rough acquaintance with them into something o
closer and more delicate woof, he passed through these conside
tions one by one, or held any formal review or great field-da
his thoughts. But what I mean to say, and do say is, that as
functions of Toby's body, his digestive organs for example, did
their own cunning, and by a great many operations of which
was altogether ignorant, and the knowledge of which would h
astonished him very much, arrive at a certain end; so his men
faculties, without his privity or concurrence, set all these whe
and springs in motion, with a thousand others, when they wor
to bring about his liking for the Bells.

And though I had said his love, I would not have recalled
word, though it would scarcely have expressed his complica
feeling. For, being but a simple man, he invested them with

ange and solemn character. They were so mysterious, often rd and never seen; so high up, so far off, so full of such a deep ng melody, that he regarded them with a species of awe; and metimes when he looked up at the dark arched windows in the er, he half expected to be beckoned to by something which was a Bell, and yet was what he heard so often sounding in the imes. For all this, Toby scouted with indignation a certain ng rumour that the Chimes were haunted, as implying the ibility of their being connected with any Evil thing. In short, y were very often in his ears, and very often in his thoughts, always in his good opinion; and he very often got such a crick his neck by staring with his mouth wide open, at the steeple re they hung, that he was fain to take an extra trot or two, rwards, to cure it.

The very thing he was in the act of doing one cold day, when last drowsy sound of Twelve o'clock, just struck, was humming a melodious monster of a Bee, and not by any means a busy , all through the steeple!

"Dinner-time, eh!" said Toby, trotting up and down before church. "Ah!"

Toby's nose was very red, and his eyelids were very red, and winked very much, and his shoulders were very near his ears, his legs were very stiff; and altogether he was evidently a way upon the frosty side of cool.

"Dinner-time, eh!" repeated Toby, using his right-hand muffler an infantine boxing-glove, and punishing his chest for being l. "Ah-h-h-h!"

He took a silent trot, after that, for a minute or two.

"There's nothing," said Toby, breaking forth afresh,—but here stopped short in his trot, and with a face of great interest and e alarm, felt his nose carefully all the way up. It was but a le way (not being much of a nose) and he had soon finished.

"I thought it was gone," said Toby, trotting off again. "It's right, however. I am sure I couldn't blame it if it was to go. has a precious hard service of it in the bitter weather, and ious little to look forward to: for I don't take snuff myself. a good deal tried, poor creetur, at the best of times; for when es get hold of a pleasant whiff or so (which an't too often), generally from somebody else's dinner, a-coming home from the er's."

The reflection reminded him of that other reflection, which he left unfinished.

"There's nothing," said Toby, "more regular in its coming l than dinner-time, and nothing less regular in its coming

round than dinner. That's the great difference between 'em. took me a long time to find it out. I wonder whether it wo be worth any gentleman's while, now, to buy that observation the Papers ; or the Parliament ! "

Toby was only joking, for he gravely shook his head in s depreciation.

" Why ! Lord ! " said Toby. " The Papers is full of observati as it is ; and so's the Parliament. Here's last week's paper, no taking a very dirty one from his pocket, and holding it from h at arm's length ; " full of observations ! Full of observatio I like to know the news as well as any man," said Toby, slow folding it a little smaller, and putting it in his pocket again : " it almost goes against the grain with me to read a paper now. frightens me almost. I don't know what we poor people coming to. Lord send we may be coming to something better the New Year nigh upon us ! "

" Why, father, father ! " said a pleasant voice, hard by.

But Toby, not hearing it, continued to trot backwards a forwards : musing as he went, and talking to himself.

" It seems as if we can't go right, or do right, or be righte said Toby. " I hadn't much schooling, myself, when I was you and I can't make out whether we have any business on the face the earth, or not. Sometimes I think we must have a little ; a sometimes I think we must be intruding. I get so puzzled so times that I am not even able to make up my mind whether th is any good at all in us, or whether we are born bad. We se to be dreadful things ; we seem to give a deal of trouble ; we always being complained of and guarded against. One way other, we fill the papers. Talk of a New Year ! " said To mournfully. " I can bear up as well as another man at m times ; better than a good many, for I am as strong as a lion, a all men an't ; but supposing it should really be that we have right to a New Year—supposing we really *are* intruding——"

" Why, father, father ! " said the pleasant voice again.

Toby heard it this time ; started ; stopped ; and shortening sight, which had been directed a long way off as seeking for lightenment in the very heart of the approaching year, found hi self face to face with his own child, and looking close into her ey

Bright eyes they were. Eyes that would bear a world of lo ing in, before their depth was fathomed. Dark eyes, that reflect back the eyes which searched them ; not flashingly, or at t owner's will, but with a clear, calm, honest, patient radian claiming kindred with that light which Heaven called into bei Eyes that were beautiful and true, and beaming with Hope. Wi

ope so young and fresh; with Hope so buoyant, vigorous, and ight, despite the twenty years of work and poverty on which ey had looked; that they became a voice to Trotty Veck, and id: "I think we have some business here—a little!"

Trotty kissed the lips belonging to the eyes, and squeezed the ooming face between his hands.

"Why, Pet," said Trotty. "What's to do? I didn't expect u to-day, Meg."

"Neither did I expect to come, father," cried the girl, nodding r head and smiling as she spoke. "But here I am! And not ne; not alone!"

"Why you don't mean to say," observed Trotty, looking iously at a covered basket which she carried in her hand, "that ——"

"Smell it, father dear," said Meg. "Only smell it!"

Trotty was going to lift up the cover at once, in a great hurry, en she gaily interposed her hand.

"No, no, no," said Meg, with the glee of a child. "Lengthen out a little. Let me just lift up the corner; just the lit-tle ti-ny ner, you know," said Meg, suiting the action to the word with utmost gentleness, and speaking very softly, as if she were aid of being overheard by something inside the basket; "there. w. What's that?"

Toby took the shortest possible sniff at the edge of the basket, cried out in a rapture:

"Why, it's hot!"

"It's burning hot!" cried Meg. "Ha, ha, ha! It's scalding !"

"Ha, ha, ha!" roared Toby, with a sort of kick. "It's scalding !"

"But what is it, father?" said Meg. "Come! You haven't ssed what it is. And you must guess what it is. I can't think taking it out, till you guess what it is. Don't be in such a ry! Wait a minute! A little bit more of the cover. Now s!"

Meg was in a perfect fright lest he should guess right too soon; king away, as she held the basket towards him; curling up pretty shoulders; stopping her ear with her hand, as if by so she could keep the right word out of Toby's lips; and ing softly the whole time.

Meanwhile Toby, putting a hand on each knee, bent down his to the basket, and took a long inspiration at the lid; the upon his withered face expanding in the process, as if he were ling laughing gas.

"Ah! It's very nice," said Toby. "It an't—I suppose an't Polonies?"

"No, no, no!" cried Meg, delighted. "Nothing like Polonies

"No," said Toby, after another sniff. "It's—it's mellow than Polonies. It's very nice. It improves every moment. I too decided for Trotters. An't it?"

Meg was in an ecstasy. He could not have gone wider of t mark than Trotters—except Polonies.

"Liver?" said Toby, communing with himself. "No. Ther a mildness about it that don't answer to liver. Pettitoes? N It an't faint enough for pettitoes. It wants the stringiness Cocks' heads. And I know it an't sausages. I'll tell you wh it is. It's chitterlings!"

"No, it an't!" cried Meg, in a burst of delight. "No, an't!"

"Why, what am I a-thinking of!" said Toby, sudden recovering a position as near the perpendicular as it was possi for him to assume. "I shall forget my own name next. I tripe!"

Tripe it was; and Meg, in high joy, protested he should s in half a minute more, it was the best tripe ever stewed.

"And so," said Meg, busying herself exultingly with t basket, "I'll lay the cloth at once, father; for I have brought t tripe in a basin, and tied the basin up in a pocket-handkerchi and if I like to be proud for once, and spread that for a cloth, a call it a cloth, there's no law to prevent me; is there, father?"

"Not that I know of, my dear," said Toby. "But they always a bringing up some new law or other."

"And according to what I was reading you in the paper t other day, father; what the Judge said, you know; we p people are supposed to know them all. Ha, ha! What mistake! My goodness me, how clever they think us!"

"Yes, my dear," cried Trotty; "and they'd be very fond any one of us that *did* know 'em all. He'd grow fat upon t work he'd get, that man, and be popular with the gentlefolks his neighbourhood. Very much so!"

"He'd eat his dinner with an appetite, whoever he was, i smelt like this," said Meg, cheerfully. "Make haste, for the a hot potato besides, and half a pint of fresh-drawn beer in bottle. Where will you dine, father? On the Post, or on Steps? Dear, dear, how grand we are. Two places to cho from!"

"The Steps to-day, my Pet," said Trotty. "Steps in weather. Post in wet. There's a greater conveniency in

keps at all times, because of the sitting down; but they're heumatic in the damp."

"Then here," said Meg, clapping her hands, after a moment's astle; "here it is, all ready! And beautiful it looks! Come, ther. Come!"

Since his discovery of the contents of the basket, Trotty had en standing looking at her—and had been speaking too—in an stracted manner, which showed that though she was the object his thoughts and eyes, to the exclusion even of tripe, he neither w nor thought about her as she was at that moment, but had fore him some imaginary rough sketch or drama of her future e. Roused, now, by her cheerful summons, he shook off a elancholy shake of the head which was just coming upon him, d trotted to her side. As he was stooping to sit down, the himes rang.

"Amen!" said Trotty, pulling off his hat and looking up wards them.

"Amen to the Bells, father?" cried Meg.

"They broke in like a grace, my dear," said Trotty, taking his at. "They'd say a good one, I am sure, if they could. Many's e kind thing they say to me."

"The Bells do, father!" laughed Meg, as she set the basin, d a knife and fork, before him. "Well!"

"Seem to, my Pet," said Trotty, falling to with great vigour. nd where's the difference? If I hear 'em, what does it matter ether they speak it or not? Why bless you, my dear," said oby, pointing at the tower with his fork, and becoming more imated under the influence of dinner, "how often have I heard em bells say, 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart Toby! oby Veck, Toby Veck, keep a good heart Toby!' A million mes? More!"

"Well, I never!" cried Meg.

She had, though—over and over again. For it was Toby's stant topic.

"When things is very bad," said Trotty; "very bad indeed, ean; almost at the worst; then it's 'Toby Veck, Toby Veck, coming soon, Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, job coming n, Toby!' That way."

"And it comes—at last, father," said Meg, with a touch of ness in her pleasant voice.

"Always," answered the unconscious Toby. "Never fails."

While this discourse was holding, Trotty made no pause in his ck upon the savoury meat before him, but cut and ate, and cut drank, and cut and chewed, and dodged about, from tripe to

hot potato, and from hot potato back again to tripe, with unctuous and unflagging relish. But happening now to look round the street—in case anybody should be beckoning from door or window, for a porter—his eyes, in coming back ag encountered Meg: sitting opposite to him, with her arms fold and only busy in watching his progress with a smile of happine

"Why, Lord forgive me!" said Trotty, dropping his knife fork. "My dove! Meg! why didn't you tell me what a b I was?"

"Father?"

"Sitting here," said Trotty, in penitent explanation, "cr ming, and stuffing, and gorging myself; and you before me th never so much as breaking your precious fast, nor wanting when——"

"But I have broken it, father," interposed his daugh laughing, "all to bits. I have had my dinner."

"Nonsense," said Trotty. "Two dinners in one day! It possible! You might as well tell me that two New Year's D will come together, or that I have had a gold head all my life, never changed it."

"I have had my dinner, father, for all that," said Meg, com nearer to him. "And if you'll go on with yours, I'll tell you and where; and how your dinner came to be brought; and— something else besides."

Toby still appeared incredulous; but she looked into his with her clear eyes, and laying her hand upon his shoul motioned him to go on while the meat was hot. So Trotty t up his knife and fork again, and went to work. But much m slowly than before, and shaking his head, as if he were not at pleased with himself.

"I had my dinner, father," said Meg, after a little hesitati "with—with Richard. His dinner-time was early; and as brought his dinner with him when he came to see me, we— had it together, father."

Trotty took a little beer, and smacked his lips. Then he "Oh!"—because she waited.

"And Richard says, father——" Meg resumed. Then stopp

"What does Richard say, Meg?" asked Toby.

"Richard says, father——" Another stoppage.

"Richard's a long time saying it," said Toby.

"He says then, father," Meg continued, lifting up her eyes last, and speaking in a tremble, but quite plainly; "another y is nearly gone, and where is the use of waiting on from yea year, when it is so unlikely we shall ever be better off than we

w? He says we are poor now, father, and we shall be poor en; but we are young now, and years will make us old before e know it. He says that if we wait: people in our condition: til we see our way quite clearly, the way will be a narrow one deed—the common way—the Grave, father."

A bolder man than Trotty Veck must needs have drawn upon s boldness largely, to deny it. Trotty held his peace.

"And how hard, father, to grow old, and die, and think we ight have cheered and helped each other! How hard in all our es to love each other; and to grieve, apart, to see each other rking, changing, growing old and grey. Even if I got the tter of it, and forgot him (which I never could), oh father dear, w hard to have a heart so full as mine is now, and live to have slowly drained out every drop, without the recollection of one ppy moment of a woman's life, to stay behind and comfort me, d make me better!"

Trotty sat quite still. Meg dried her eyes, and said more gaily: at is to say, with here a laugh, and there a sob, and here a laugh d sob together:

"So Richard says, father; as his work was yesterday made rtain for some time to come, and as I love him and have loved m full three years—ah! longer than that, if he knew it!—will I rry him on New Year's Day; the best and happiest day, he says, the whole year, and one that is almost sure to bring good fortune th it. It's a short notice, father—isn't it?—but I haven't my rtune to be settled, or my wedding dresses to be made, like the eat ladies, father—have I? And he said so much, and said it in s way; so strong and earnest, and all the time so kind and ntle; that I said I'd come and talk to you, father. And as they id the money for that work of mine this morning (unexpectedly, m sure!), and as you have fared very poorly for a whole week, d as I couldn't help wishing there should be something to make is day a sort of holiday to you as well as a dear and happy day i me, father, I made a little treat and brought it to surprise you."

"And see how he leaves it cooling on the step!" said another ice.

It was the voice of this same Richard, who had come upon them observed, and stood before the father and daughter: looking wn upon them with a face as glowing as the iron on which his out sledge-hammer daily rung. A handsome, well-made, powerful ngster he was; with eyes that sparkled like the red-hot ppings from a furnace fire; black hair that curled about his rthy temples rarely; and a smile—a smile that bore out Meg's logium on his style of conversation.

"See how he leaves it cooling on the step!" said Richa
"Meg don't know what he likes. Not she!"

Trotty, all action and enthusiasm, immediately reached up
hand to Richard, and was going to address him in a great hur
when the house-door opened without any warning, and a footm
very nearly put his foot in the tripe.

"Out of the vays here, will you! You must always go and
a settin' on our steps, must you! You can't go and give a turn
none of the neighbours never, can't you! *Will* you clear the ro
or won't you?"

Strictly speaking, the last question was irrelevant, as they h
already done it.

"What's the matter, what's the matter!" said the gentleman
whom the door was opened: coming out of the house at that ki
of light-heavy pace—that peculiar compromise between a walk a
a jog-trot—with which a gentleman upon the smooth down-hill
life, wearing creaking boots, a watch-chain, and clean linen, *m*
come out of his house: not only without any abatement of
dignity, but with an expression of having important and wealt
engagements elsewhere. "What's the matter. What's t
matter!"

"You're always a being begged, and prayed, upon your bend
knees you are," said the footman with great emphasis to Trot
Veck, "to let our door-steps be. Why don't you let 'em b
CAN'T you let 'em be?"

"There! That'll do, that'll do!" said the gentleman. "Hall
there! Porter!" beckoning with his head to Trotty Veck. "Co
here. What's that? Your dinner?"

"Yes Sir," said Trotty, leaving it behind him in a corner.

"Don't leave it there," exclaimed the gentleman. "Bring
here, bring it here. So! This is your dinner, is it?"

"Yes Sir," repeated Trotty, looking, with a fixed eye and
watery mouth, at the piece of tripe he had reserved for a l
delicious tit-bit; which the gentleman was now turning over a
over on the end of the fork.

Two other gentlemen had come out with him. One was a lo
spirited gentleman of middle age, of a meagre habit, and a disc
solate face; who kept his hands continually in the pockets of
scanty pepper-and-salt trousers, very large and dog's-eared fr
that custom; and was not particularly well brushed or washe
The other, a full-sized, sleek, well-conditioned gentleman, in a bl
coat with bright buttons, and a white cravat. This gentleman h
a very red face, as if an undue proportion of the blood in his bo
were squeezed up into his head; which perhaps accounted for

wing also the appearance of being rather cold about the art.

He who had Toby's meat upon the fork, called to the first one

by the name of Filer; and they both drew near together. Mr. Filer being exceedingly short-sighted, was obliged to go so close to the remnant of Toby's dinner before he could make out what it was, that Toby's heart leaped up into his mouth. But Mr. Filer didn't eat it.

"This is a description of animal food, Alderman," said Filer, aking little punches in it, with a pencil-case, "commonly known to e labouring population of this country, by the name of tripe."

"Now, you know," said the Alderman, addressing his friends, with a self-complacent smile upon his face which habitual to him, "I am a plain man, and a practical man; a go to work in a plain practical way. That's my way. Ther not the least mystery or difficulty in dealing with this sor people if you only understand 'em, and can talk to 'em in t own manner. Now, you Porter! Don't you ever tell me, anybody else, my friend, that you haven't always enough to and of the best; because I know better. I have tasted y tripe, you know, and you can't 'chaff' me. You underst what 'chaff' means, eh? That's the right word, isn't it? ha, ha! Lord bless you," said the Alderman, turning to friends again, "it's the easiest thing on earth to deal with sort of people, if you understand 'em."

Famous man for the common people, Alderman Cute! Ne out of temper with them! Easy, affable, joking, knowing gen man!

"You see, my friend," pursued the Alderman, "there's a gr deal of nonsense talked about Want—'hard up,' you know: th the phrase, isn't it? ha! ha! ha!—and I intend to Put it Do There's a certain amount of cant in vogue about Starvation, an mean to Put it Down. That's all! Lord bless you," said Alderman, turning to his friends again, "you may Put Down a thing among this sort of people, if you only know the way to about it!"

Trotty took Meg's hand and drew it through his arm. didn't seem to know what he was doing though.

"Your daughter, eh?" said the Alderman, chucking familiarly under the chin.

Always affable with the working classes, Alderman Cu Knew what pleased them! Not a bit of pride!

"Where's her mother?" asked that worthy gentleman.

"Dead," said Toby. "Her mother got up linen; and called to Heaven when She was born."

"Not to get up linen *there*, I suppose," remarked the Al man pleasantly.

Toby might or might not have been able to separate his wife Heaven from her old pursuits. But query: If Mrs. Alderman C had gone to Heaven, would Mr. Alderman Cute have pictured as holding any state or station there?

"And you're making love to her, are you?" said Cute to young smith.

"Yes," returned Richard quickly, for he was nettled by question. "And we are going to be married on New Year's Da

"What do you mean!" cried Filer sharply. "Married!"

"Why, yes, we're thinking of it, Master," said Richard. "We're ther in a hurry, you see, in case it should be Put Down first."

"Ah!" cried Filer, with a groan. "Put *that* down indeed, derman, and you'll do something. Married! Married!! The norance of the first principles of political economy on the part these people; their improvidence; their wickedness; is, by eavens! enough to—Now look at that couple, will you!"

Well! They were worth looking at. And marriage seemed as asonable and fair a deed as they need have in contemplation.

"A man may live to be as old as Methusaleh," said Mr. Filer, and may labour all his life for the benefit of such people as ose; and may heap up facts on figures, facts on figures, facts on ures, mountains high and dry; and he can no more hope to rsuade 'em that they have no right or business to be married, an he can hope to persuade 'em that they have no earthly right business to be born. And *that* we know they haven't. We duced it to a mathematical certainty long ago."

Alderman Cute was mightily diverted, and laid his right fore-ger on the side of his nose, as much as to say to both his friends, Observe me, will you! Keep your eye on the practical man!" and called Meg to him.

"Come here, my girl!" said Alderman Cute.

The young blood of her lover had been mounting, wrathfully, thin the last few minutes; and he was indisposed to let her me. But, setting a constraint upon himself, he came forward th a stride as Meg approached, and stood beside her. Trotty pt her hand within his arm still, but looked from face to face as ldly as a sleeper in a dream.

"Now, I'm going to give you a word or two of good advice, y girl," said the Alderman, in his nice easy way. "It's my ice to give advice, you know, because I'm a Justice. You know n a Justice, don't you?"

Meg timidly said, "Yes." But everybody knew Alderman Cute s a Justice! Oh dear, so active a Justice always! Who such mote of brightness in the public eye, as Cute!

"You are going to be married, you say," pursued the Alderman. Very unbecoming and indelicate in one of your sex! But never nd that. After you are married, you'll quarrel with your sband, and come to be a distressed wife. You may think not: t you will, because I tell you so. Now I give you fair warning, at I have made up my mind to Put distressed wives Down. , don't be brought before me. You'll have children—boys. ose boys will grow up bad of course, and run wild in the streets,

without shoes and stockings. Mind, my young friend! I'll conv
'em summarily, every one, for I am determined to Put boys wi
out shoes and stockings, Down. Perhaps your husband will
young (most likely) and leave you with a baby. Then you'll
turned out of doors, and wander up and down the streets. No
don't wander near me, my dear, for I am resolved to Put
wandering mothers Down. All young mothers, of all sorts a
kinds, it's my determination to Put Down. Don't think to ple
illness as an excuse with me; or babies as an excuse with me;
all sick persons and young children (I hope you know the Chu
Service, but I'm afraid not) I am determined to Put Down. A
if you attempt, desperately, and ungratefully, and impiously, a
fraudulently attempt, to drown yourself, or hang yourself, I'll h
no pity on you, for I have made up my mind to Put all suic
Down. If there is one thing," said the Alderman, with his s
satisfied smile, "on which I can be said to have made up my mi
more than on another, it is to Put suicide Down. So don't try
on. That's the phrase, isn't it! Ha, ha! now we understa
each other."

Toby knew not whether to be agonised or glad to see that M
had turned a deadly white, and dropped her lover's hand.

"As for you, you dull dog," said the Alderman, turning w
even increased cheerfulness and urbanity to the young smi
"what are you thinking of being married for? What do you w
to be married for, you silly fellow! If I was a fine, you
strapping chap like you, I should be ashamed of being milk
enough to pin myself to a woman's apron-strings! Why, she'll
an old woman before you're a middle-aged man! And a pre
figure you'll cut then, with a draggle-tailed wife and a crowd
squalling children crying after you wherever you go!"

O, he knew how to banter the common people, Alderman Cu

"There! Go along with you," said the Alderman, "
repent. Don't make such a fool of yourself as to get married
New Year's Day. You'll think very differently of it long bef
next New Year's Day; a trim young fellow like you, with all
girls looking after you. There! Go along with you!"

They went along. Not arm in arm, or hand in hand,
interchanging bright glances: but she in tears, he gloomy
down-looking. Were these the hearts that had so lately made
Toby's leap up from its faintness? No, no. The Alderman
blessing on his head!) had Put *them* Down.

"As you happen to be here," said the Alderman to Toby, "
shall carry a letter for me. Can you be quick? You're an
man."

Toby, who had been looking after Meg, quite stupidly, made ft to murmur out that he was very quick, and very strong.

"How old are you?" inquired the Alderman.

"I'm over sixty, Sir," said Toby.

"O! This man's a great deal past the average age, you know," ed Mr. Filer, breaking in as if his patience would bear some ing, but this really was carrying matters a little too far.

"I feel I'm intruding, Sir," said Toby. "I—I misdoubted it s morning. Oh dear me!"

The Alderman cut him short by giving him the letter from his cket. Toby would have got a shilling too; but Mr. Filer arly showing that in that case he would rob a certain given mber of persons of ninepence-halfpenny a-piece, he only got pence; and thought himself very well off to get that.

Then the Alderman gave an arm to each of his friends, and lked off in high feather; but he immediately came hurrying ck alone, as if he had forgotten something.

"Porter!" said the Alderman.

"Sir!" said Toby.

"Take care of that daughter of yours. She's much too ndsome."

"Even her good looks are stolen from somebody or other suppose," thought Toby, looking at the sixpence in his hand, d thinking of the tripe. "She's been and robbed five hun- d ladies of a bloom a-piece, I shouldn't wonder. It's very adful!"

"She's much too handsome, my man," repeated the Alderman. The chances are, that she'll come to no good, I clearly see. serve what I say. Take care of her!" With which, he hurried again.

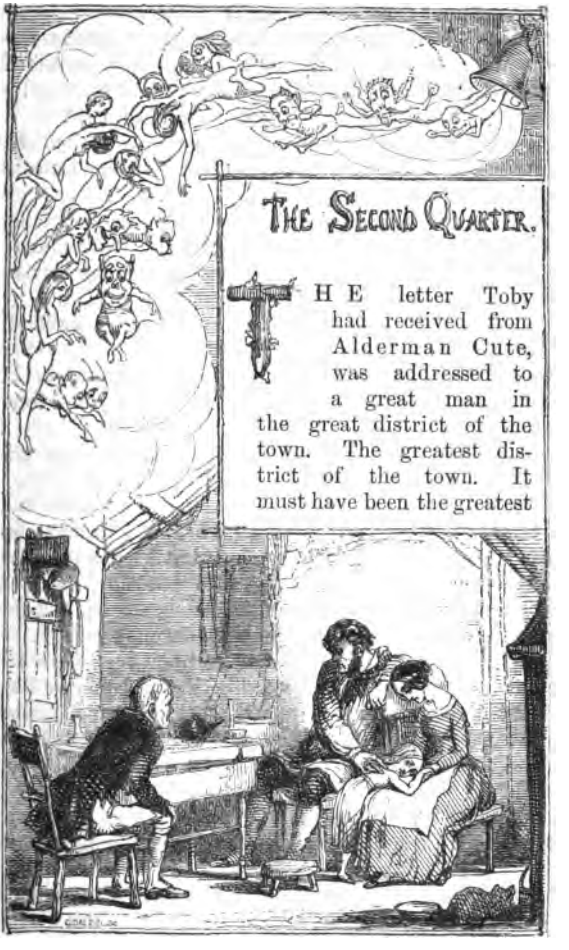
"Wrong every way. Wrong every way!" said Trotty, clasping hands. "Born bad. No business here!"

The Chimes came clashing in upon him as he said the words. ll, loud, and sounding—but with no encouragement. No, not drop.

"The tune's changed," cried the old man, as he listened. There's not a word of all that fancy in it. Why should there I have no business with the New Year nor with the old one ther. Let me die!"

Still the Bells, pealing forth their changes, made the very air in. Put 'em down, Put 'em down! Good old Times, Good old mes! Facts and Figures, Facts and Figures! Put 'em down, t 'em down! If they said anything they said this, till the brain Toby reeled.

He pressed his bewildered head between his hands, as if to k it from splitting asunder. A well-timed action, as it happen for finding the letter in one of them, and being by that me reminded of his charge, he fell, mechanically, into his usual t and trotted off.



The Second Quarter.

THE letter Toby had received from Alderman Cute, was addressed to a great man in the great district of the town. The greatest district of the town. It must have been the greatest

trict of the town, because it was commonly called The World its inhabitants.

The letter positively seemed heavier in Toby's hand, than ther letter. Not because the Alderman had sealed it with a y large coat of arms and no end of wax, but because of the

weighty name on the superscription, and the ponderous amount gold and silver with which it was associated.

"How different from us!" thought Toby, in all simplicity a earnestness, as he looked at the direction. "Divide the liv turtles in the bills of mortality, by the number of gentlefolks a to buy 'em; and whose share does he take but his own! As snatching tripe from anybody's mouth—he'd scorn it!"

With the involuntary homage due to such an exalted charact Toby interposed a corner of his apron between the letter and fingers.

"His children," said Trotty, and a mist rose before his ey "his daughters—Gentlemen may win their hearts and ma them; they may be happy wives and mothers; they may be ha some like my darling M—e—"

He couldn't finish the name. The final letter swelled in throat, to the size of the whole alphabet.

"Never mind," thought Trotty. "I know what I me That's more than enough for me." And with this consolat rumination, trotted on.

It was a hard frost, that day. The air was bracing, crisp, clear. The wintry sun, though powerless for warmth, loo brightly down upon the ice it was too weak to melt, and se radiant glory there. At other times, Trotty might have learne poor man's lesson from the wintry sun; but he was past that n

The Year was Old that day. The patient Year had li through the reproaches and misuses of its slanderers, and faithf performed its work. Spring, summer, autumn, winter. It laboured through the destined round, and now laid down its we head to die. Shut out from hope, high impulse, active happin itself, but active messenger of many joys to others, it made ap in its decline to have its toiling days and patient hours rem bered, and to die in peace. Trotty might have read a poor m allegory in the fading year; but he was past that now.

And only he? Or has the like appeal been ever made, seventy years at once upon an English labourer's head, and m in vain!

The streets were full of motion, and the shops were decked gaily. The New Year, like an Infant Heir to the whole wo was waited for, with welcomes, presents, and rejoicings. Th were books and toys for the New Year, glittering trinkets for New Year, dresses for the New Year, schemes of fortune for New Year; new inventions to beguile it. Its life was parce out in almanacks and pocket-books; the coming of its moons, stars, and tides, was known beforehand to the moment; all

gs of its seasons in their days and nights, were calculated
s much precision as Mr. Filer could work sums in men and

. New Year, the New Year. Everywhere the New Year!
ld Year was already looked upon as dead; and its effects
elling cheap, like some drowned mariner's aboard ship. Its
s were Last Year's and going at a sacrifice, before its
was gone. Its treasures were mere dirt, beside the riches
nborn successor!
tty had no portion, to his thinking, in the New Year or the

ut 'em down, Put 'em down! Facts and Figures, Facts
gures! Good old Times, Good old Times! Put 'em down,
m down!"—his trot went to that measure, and would fit
o nothing else.
even that one, melancholy as it was, brought him, in due
o the end of his journey. To the mansion of Sir Joseph
, Member of Parliament.
door was opened by a Porter. Such a Porter! Not of
order. Quite another thing. His place was the ticket
; not Toby's.
s Porter underwent some hard panting before he could
having breathed himself by coming incautiously out of his
without first taking time to think about it and compose his
When he had found his voice—which it took him some
o do, for it was a long way off, and hidden under a load of
-he said in a fat whisper,
Who's it from?"
by told him.
ou're to take it in, yourself," said the Porter, pointing to a
at the end of a long passage, opening from the hall.
ything goes straight in, on this day of the year. You're
bit too soon, for the carriage is at the door now, and they
nly come to town for a couple of hours, a' purpose."
by wiped his feet (which were quite dry already) with great
nd took the way pointed out to him; observing as he went
was an awfully grand house, but hushed and covered up,
he family were in the country. Knocking at the room door,
told to enter from within; and doing so found himself in
ous library, where, at a table strewn with files and papers,
stately lady in a bonnet; and a not very stately gentleman
ck who wrote from her dictation; while another, and an
and a much statelier gentleman, whose hat and cane were
table, walked up and down, with one hand in his breast,

and looked complacently from time to time at his own picture—full length; a very full length—hanging over the fireplace.

"What is this?" sa
the last-named gentlema
"Mr. Fish, will yo
have the goodness
attend?"

Mr. Fish begge
pardon, and taking the letter from Toby, handed it, with gre
respect.

"From Alderman Cute, Sir Joseph."

s this all? Have you nothing else, Porter?" inquired Sir
n.

by replied in the negative.

You have no bill or demand upon me; my name is Bowley,
oseph Bowley; of any kind from anybody, have you?" said
oseph. "If you have, present it. There is a cheque-book
e side of Mr. Fish. I allow nothing to be carried into the
Year. Every description of account is settled in this house
close of the old one. So that if death was to—to——"

To cut," suggested Mr. Fish.

To sever, Sir," returned Sir Joseph, with great asperity, "the
f existence—my affairs would be found, I hope, in a state of
ation."

My dear Sir Joseph!" said the lady, who was greatly
er than the gentleman. "How shocking!"

My Lady Bowley," returned Sir Joseph, floundering now and
as in the great depth of his observations, "at this season of
ear we should think of—of—ourselves. We should look
ur—our accounts. We should feel that every return of so
ful a period in human transactions, involves matters of deep
nt between a man and his—and his banker."

Joseph delivered these words as if he felt the full morality
at he was saying; and desired that even Trotty should have
portunity of being improved by such discourse. Possibly he
his end before him in still forbearing to break the seal of the
and in telling Trotty to wait where he was, a minute.

You were desiring Mr. Fish to say, my lady——" observed
oseph.

Mr. Fish has said that, I believe," returned his lady, glancing
letter. "But, upon my word, Sir Joseph, I don't think I
t it go after all. It is so very dear."

What is dear?" inquired Sir Joseph.

That Charity, my love. They only allow two votes for a
iption of five pounds. Really monstrous!"

My Lady Bowley," returned Sir Joseph, "you surprise me.
luxury of feeling in proportion to the number of votes; or
to a rightly constituted mind, in proportion to the number of
ants, and the wholesome state of mind to which their
ssing reduces them? Is there no excitement of the purest
in having two votes to dispose of among fifty people?"

Not to me, I acknowledge," replied the lady. "It bores one.
es, one can't oblige one's acquaintance. But you are the
Man's Friend, you know, Sir Joseph. You think otherwise."

I *am* the Poor Man's Friend," observed Sir Joseph, glancing

at the poor man present. "As such I may be taunted. As su
I have been taunted. But I ask no other title."

"Bless him for a noble gentleman!" thought Trotty.

"I don't agree with Cute here, for instance," said Sir Josep
holding out the letter. "I don't agree with the Filer party.
don't agree with any party. My friend the Poor Man, has
business with anything of that sort, and nothing of that sort h
any business with him. My friend the Poor Man, in my distri
is my business. No man or body of men has any right to interfe
between my friend and me. That is the ground I take.
assume a—a paternal character towards my friend. I say, 'M
good fellow, I will treat you paternally.'"

Toby listened with great gravity, and began to feel mo
comfortable.

"Your only business, my good fellow," pursued Sir Josep
looking abstractedly at Toby; "your only business in life is wi
me. You needn't trouble yourself to think about anything.
will think for you; I know what is good for you; I am yo
perpetual parent. Such is the dispensation of an all-w
Providence! Now, the design of your creation is: not that y
should swill, and guzzle, and associate your enjoyments, brutal
with food"—Toby thought remorsefully of the tripe—"but th
you should feel the Dignity of Labour; go forth erect into t
cheerful morning air, and—and stop there. Live hard a
temperately, be respectful, exercise your self-denial, bring up yo
family on next to nothing, pay your rent as regularly as the clo
strikes, be punctual in your dealings (I set you a good examp
you will find Mr. Fish, my confidential secretary, with a cash-b
before him at all times); and you may trust me to be your Fri
and Father."

"Nice children, indeed, Sir Joseph!" said the lady, with
shudder. "Rheumatisms, and fevers, and crooked legs,
asthmas, and all kinds of horrors!"

"My lady," returned Sir Joseph, with solemnity, "not the l
am I the Poor Man's Friend and Father. Not the less shall
receive encouragement at my hands. Every quarter-day he
be put in communication with Mr. Fish. Every New Year's D
myself and friends will drink his health. Once every year, my
and friends will address him with the deepest feeling. Once in
life, he may even perhaps receive; in public, in the presence of
gentry; a Trifle from a Friend. And when, upheld no more
these stimulants, and the Dignity of Labour, he sinks into his co
fortable grave, then my lady"—here Sir Joseph blew his nose—
will be a Friend and Father—on the same terms—to his childre

Toby was greatly moved.

"Oh! You have a thankful family, Sir Joseph!" cried his wife.

"My lady," said Sir Joseph, quite majestically, "Ingratitude is known to be the sin of that class. I expect no other return."

"Ah! Born bad!" thought Toby. "Nothing melts us."

"What man can do, *I* do," pursued Sir Joseph. "I do my duty as the Poor Man's Friend and Father; and I endeavour to educate his mind, by inculcating on all occasions the one great moral lesson which that class requires. That is, entire Dependence on himself. They have no business whatever with—with themselves. If wicked and designing persons tell them otherwise, and they become impatient and discontented, and are guilty of insubordinate conduct and black-hearted ingratitude; which is undoubtedly the case; I am their Friend and Father still. It is so Ordained. It is in the nature of things."

With that great sentiment, he opened the Alderman's letter; and read it.

"Very polite and attentive, I am sure!" exclaimed Sir Joseph. "My lady, the Alderman is so obliging as to remind me that he has had 'the distinguished honour'—he is very good—of meeting me at the house of our mutual friend Deedles, the banker; and he does me the favour to inquire whether it will be agreeable to me to have Will Fern put down."

"*Most* agreeable!" replied my Lady Bowley. "The worst man among them! He has been committing a robbery, I hope?"

"Why no," said Sir Joseph, referring to the letter. "Not quite. Very near. Not quite. He came up to London, it seems, to look for employment (trying to better himself—that's his story), and being found at night asleep in a shed, was taken into custody and carried next morning before the Alderman. The Alderman observes (very properly) that he is determined to put this sort of thing down; and that if it will be agreeable to me to have Will Fern put down, he will be happy to begin with him."

"Let him be made an example of, by all means," returned the lady. "Last winter, when I introduced pinking and eyelet-holing among the men and boys in the village, as a nice evening employment, and had the lines,

> O let us love our occupations,
> Bless the squire and his relations,
> Live upon our daily rations,
> And always know our proper stations,

set to music on the new system, for them to sing the while; this Fern—I see him now—touched that hat of his, and said, 'I

humbly ask your pardon, my lady, but *an't* I something differ from a great girl?' I expected it, of course; who can ex anything but insolence and ingratitude from that class of peo That is not to the purpose, however. Sir Joseph! Make example of him!"

"Hem!" coughed Sir Joseph. "Mr. Fish, if you'll have goodness to attend——"

Mr. Fish immediately seized his pen, and wrote from Sir Jose dictation.

"Private. My dear Sir. I am very much indebted to for your courtesy in the matter of the man William Fern, of wh I regret to add, I can say nothing favourable. I have unifor considered myself in the light of his Friend and Father, but h been repaid (a common case I grieve to say) with ingratitude, constant opposition to my plans. He is a turbulent and rebelli spirit. His character will not bear investigation. Nothing persuade him to be happy when he might. Under these circ stances, it appears to me, I own, that when he 'comes before again (as you informed me he promised to do to-morrow, pend your inquiries, and I think he may be so far relied upon), committal for some short term as a Vagabond, would be a ser to society, and would be a salutary example in a country wher for the sake of those who are, through good and evil report, Friends and Fathers of the Poor, as well as with a view to t generally speaking, misguided class themselves—examples greatly needed. And I am," and so forth.

"It appears," remarked Sir Joseph when he had signed letter, and Mr. Fish was sealing it, "as if this were Ordai really. At the close of the year, I wind up my account and st my balance, even with William Fern!"

Trotty, who had long ago relapsed, and was very low-spiri stepped forward with a rueful face to take the letter.

"With my compliments and thanks," said Sir Joseph. "Sto

"Stop!" echoed Mr. Fish.

"You have heard, perhaps," said Sir Joseph, oracularly, "cer remarks into which I have been led respecting the solemn pe of time at which we have arrived, and the duty imposed upo of settling our affairs, and being prepared. You have obse that I don't shelter myself behind my superior standing in soci but that Mr. Fish—that gentleman—has a cheque-book at elbow, and is in fact here, to enable me to turn over a perfe new leaf, and enter on the epoch before us with a clean acco Now my friend, can you lay your hand upon your heart, and that you also have made preparations for a New Year?"

"I am afraid Sir," stammered Trotty, looking meekly at him, hat I am a—a—little behindhand with the world."

"Behindhand with the world!" repeated Sir Joseph Bowley, a tone of terrible distinctness.

"I am afraid Sir," faltered Trotty, "that there's a matter of or twelve shillings owing to Mrs. Chickenstalker."

"To Mrs. Chickenstalker!" repeated Sir Joseph, in the same e as before.

"A shop Sir," exclaimed Toby, "in the general line. Also a little money on account of rent. A very little Sir. It oughtn't be owing, I know, but we have been hard put to it, indeed!"

Sir Joseph looked at his lady, and at Mr. Fish, and at Trotty, after another, twice all round. He then made a despondent ture with both hands at once, as if he gave the thing up ogether.

"How a man, even among this improvident and impracticable e; an old man; a man grown grey; can look a New Year in face, with his affairs in this condition; how he can lie down his bed at night, and get up again in the morning, and—ere!" he said, turning his back on Trotty. "Take the letter. ke the letter!"

"I heartily wish it was otherwise, Sir," said Trotty, anxious to use himself. "We have been tried very hard."

Sir Joseph still repeating "Take the letter, take the letter!" d Mr. Fish not only saying the same thing, but giving additional ce to the request by motioning the bearer to the door, he had thing for it but to make his bow and leave the house. And in street, poor Trotty pulled his worn old hat down on his head, hide the grief he felt at getting no hold on the New Year, where.

He didn't even lift his hat to look up at the Bell tower when came to the old church on his return. He halted there a ment, from habit: and knew that it was growing dark, and t the steeple rose above him, indistinct and faint, in the murky He knew, too, that the Chimes would ring immediately; d that they sounded to his fancy, at such a time, like voices in clouds. But he only made the more haste to deliver the derman's letter, and get out of the way before they began; for dreaded to hear them tagging "Friends and Fathers, Friends d Fathers," to the burden they had rung out last.

Toby discharged himself of his commission, therefore, with all sible speed, and set off trotting homeward. But what with pace, which was at best an awkward one in the street; and at with his hat, which didn't improve it; he trotted against

somebody in less than no time, and was sent staggering out into t road.

"I beg your pardon, I'm sure!" said Trotty, pulling up hat in great confusion, and between the hat and the torn lini fixing his head into a kind of bee-hive. "I hope I haven't h you."

As to hurting anybody, Toby was not such an absolute Sams but that he was much more likely to be hurt himself: indeed, he had flown out into the road, like a shuttlecock. had such an opinion of his own strength, however, that he in real concern for the other party: and said again,

"I hope I haven't hurt you?"

The man against whom he had run; a sun-browned, sine country-looking man, with grizzled hair, and a rough chin; sta at him for a moment, as if he suspected him to be in j But satisfied of his good faith, he answered:

"No, friend. You have not hurt me."

"Nor the child, I hope?" said Trotty.

"Nor the child," returned the man. "I thank you kindly."

As he said so, he glanced at a little girl he carried in arms, asleep; and shading her face with the long end of poor handkerchief he wore about his throat, went slowly on.

The tone in which he said "I thank you kindly," penetra Trotty's heart. He was so jaded and foot-sore, and so so with travel, and looked about him so forlorn and strange, t it was a comfort to him to be able to thank any one: no ma for how little. Toby stood gazing after him as he plod wearily away; with the child's arm clinging round his neck.

At the figure in the worn shoes—now the very shade ghost of shoes — rough leather leggings, common frock, broad slouched hat, Trotty stood gazing: blind to the wh street. And at the child's arm, clinging round its neck.

Before he merged into the darkness, the traveller stopp and looking round, and seeing Trotty standing there yet, see undecided whether to return or go on. After doing first the and then the other, he came back; and Trotty went half to meet him.

"You can tell me, perhaps," said the man with a faint sm "and if you can I am sure you will, and I'd rather ask than another—where Alderman Cute lives."

"Close at hand," replied Toby. "I'll show you his ho with pleasure."

"I was to have gone to him elsewhere to-morrow," said man, accompanying Toby, "but I'm uneasy under suspic

id want to clear myself, and to be free to go and seek my read—I don't know where. So, maybe he'll forgive my going) his house to-night."

"It's impossible," cried Toby with a start, "that your name's ern!"

"Eh!" cried the other, turning on him in astonishment.

"Fern! Will Fern!" said Trotty.

"That's my name," replied the other.

"Why then," cried Trotty, seizing him by the arm, and oking cautiously round, "for Heaven's sake don't go to him! on't go to him! He'll put you down as sure as ever you were orn. Here! come up this alley, and I'll tell you what I mean. on't go to *him*."

His new acquaintance looked as if he thought him mad; but e bore him company nevertheless. When they were shrouded om observation, Trotty told him what he knew, and what haracter he had received, and all about it.

The subject of his history listened to it with a calmness that rprised him. He did not contradict or interrupt it, once. le nodded his head now and then—more in corroboration of n old and worn-out story, it appeared, than in refutation of it; nd once or twice threw back his hat, and passed his freckled and over a brow, where every furrow he had ploughed seemed e have set its image in little. But he did no more.

"It's true enough in the main," he said, "master. I could ft grain from husk here and there, but let it be as 'tis. What dds? I have gone against his plans; to my misfortun'. I an't help it; I should do the like to-morrow. As to character, em gentlefolks will search and search, and pry and pry, and ave it as free from spot or speck in us, afore they'll help us to) dry good word! Well! I hope they don't lose good opinion s easy as we do, or their lives is strict indeed, and hardly orth the keeping. For myself, master, I never took with that and"—holding it before him—"what wasn't my own; and ever held it back from work, however hard, or poorly paid. Whoever can deny it, let him chop it off! But when work on't maintain me like a human creetur; when my living is so ad, that I am Hungry, out of doors and in; when I see a hole working life begin that way, go on that way, and end that ay, without a chance or change; then I say to the gentlefolks Keep away from me! Let my cottage be. My doors is ark enough without your darkening of 'em more. Don't look or me to come up into the Park to help the show when there's) Birthday, or a fine Speechmaking, or what not. Act your Plays

and Games without me, and be welcome to 'em and enjoy 'em We've nowt to do with one another. I'm best let alone!'"

Seeing that the child in his arms had opened her eyes, and was looking about her in wonder, he checked himself to say word or two of foolish prattle in her ear, and stand her on the ground beside him. Then slowly winding one of her long tresses round and round his rough forefinger like a ring, while she hung about his dusty leg, he said to Trotty,

"I'm not a cross-grained man by natur', I believe; and easy satisfied, I'm sure. I bear no ill will against none of 'em: I only want to live like one of the Almighty's creeturs. I can't I don't; and so there's a pit dug between me and them that can and do. There's others like me. You might tell 'em off by hundreds and by thousands, sooner than by ones."

Trotty knew he spoke the Truth in this, and shook his head to signify as much.

"I've got a bad name this way," said Fern; "and I'm not likely, I'm afeared, to get a better. 'Tan't lawful to be out of sorts, and I AM out of sorts, though God knows I'd sooner be a cheerful spirit if I could. Well! I don't know as the Alderman could hurt *me* much by sending me to gaol; but without a friend to speak a word for me, he might do it; and you see—!" pointing downward with his finger, at the child.

"She has a beautiful face," said Trotty.

"Why yes!" replied the other in a low voice, as he gently turned it up with both his hands towards his own, and looked upon it steadfastly. "I've thought so, many times. I've thought so, when my hearth was very cold, and cupboard very bare I thought so t'other night, when we were taken like two thieves But they—they shouldn't try the little face too often, should they, Lilian? That's hardly fair upon a man!"

He sank his voice so low, and gazed upon her with an air so stern and strange, that Toby, to divert the current of his thoughts, inquired if his wife were living.

"I never had one," he returned, shaking his head. "She's my brother's child: an orphan. Nine year old, though you'd hardly think it; but she's tired and worn out now. They'd have taken care on her, the Union; eight-and-twenty mile away from where we live; between four walls (as they took care of my old father when he couldn't work no more, though he didn't trouble 'em long); but I took her instead, and she's lived with me ever since. Her mother had a friend once, in London here We are trying to find her, and to find work too; but it's a large place. Never mind. More room for us to walk about in, Lilly!

Meeting the child's eyes with a smile which melted Toby ore than tears, he shook him by the hand.

"I don't so much as know your name," he said, "but I've ened my heart free to you, for I'm thankful to you; with good ason. I'll take your advice, and keep clear of this——"

"Justice," suggested Toby.

"Ah!" he said. "If that's the name they give him. This ustice. And to-morrow will try whether there's better fortun' be met with, somewheres near London. Good night. A appy New Year!"

"Stay!" cried Trotty, catching at his hand, as he relaxed his ip. "Stay! The New Year never can be happy to me, if e part like this. The New Year never can be happy to me, I see the child and you, go wandering away, you don't know here, without a shelter for your heads. Come home with me! m a poor man, living in a poor place; but I can give you dging for one night and never miss it. Come home with me! ere! I'll take her!" cried Trotty, lifting up the child. "A retty one! I'd carry twenty times her weight, and never know d got it. Tell me if I go too quick for you. I'm very fast. always was!" Trotty said this, taking about six of his otting paces to one stride of his fatigued companion; and with is thin legs quivering again, beneath the load he bore.

"Why, she's as light," said Trotty, trotting in his speech as ell as in his gait; for he couldn't bear to be thanked, and readed a moment's pause; "as light as a feather. Lighter than Peacock's feather—a great deal lighter. Here we are, and here e go! Round this first turning to the right, Uncle Will, and st the pump, and sharp off up the passage to the left, right pposite the public-house. Here we are and here we go! Cross ver, Uncle Will, and mind the kidney pieman at the corner! ere we are and here we go! Down the Mews here, Uncle Will, d stop at the black door, with 'T. Veck, Ticket Porter' wrote pon a board; and here we are and here we go, and here we are deed, my precious Meg, surprising you!"

With which words Trotty, in a breathless state, set the child own before his daughter in the middle of the floor. The little isitor looked once at Meg; and doubting nothing in that face, but rusting everything she saw there; ran into her arms.

"Here we are and here we go!" cried Trotty, running round he room, and choking audibly. "Here, Uncle Will! Here's a re you know! Why don't you come to the fire? Oh here we re and here we go! Meg, my precious darling, where's the ettle? Here it is and here it goes, and it'll bile in no time!"

Trotty really had picked up the kettle somewhere or other the course of his wild career, and now put it on the fire: whi Meg, seating the child in a warm corner, knelt down on the groun before her, and pulled off her shoes, and dried her wet feet on cloth. Ay, and she laughed at Trotty too—so pleasantly, cheerfully, that Trotty could have blessed her where she kneeled for he had seen that, when they entered, she was sitting by th fire in tears.

"Why, father!" said Meg. "You're crazy to-night, I think I don't know what the Bells would say to that. Poor little fee How cold they are!"

"Oh, they're warmer now!" exclaimed the child. "They quite warm now!"

"No, no, no," said Meg. "We haven't rubbed 'em ha enough. We're so busy. So busy! And when they're don we'll brush out the damp hair; and when that's done, we'll brin some colour to the poor pale face with fresh water; and whe that's done, we'll be so gay, and brisk, and happy—!"

The child, in a burst of sobbing, clasped her round the neck caressed her fair cheek with its hand; and said, "Oh Meg! d dear Meg!"

Toby's blessing could have done no more. Who could more!

"Why, father!" cried Meg, after a pause.

"Here I am and here I go, my dear," said Trotty.

"Good Gracious me!" cried Meg. "He's crazy! He's pu the dear child's bonnet on the kettle, and hung the lid behin the door!"

"I didn't go to do it, my love," said Trotty, hastily repairin this mistake. "Meg, my dear?"

Meg looked towards him and saw that he had elaborate stationed himself behind the chair of their male visitor, whe with many mysterious gestures he was holding up the sixpence h had earned.

"I see, my dear," said Trotty, "as I was coming in, half a ounce of tea lying somewhere on the stairs; and I'm pretty sur there was a bit of bacon too. As I don't remember where it wa exactly; I'll go myself and try to find 'em."

With this inscrutable artifice, Toby withdrew to purchase th viands he had spoken of, for ready money, at Mrs. Chickenstalker's and presently came back, pretending he had not been able to fin them, at first, in the dark.

"But here they are at last," said Trotty, setting out the tea things, "all correct! I was pretty sure it was tea, and a rashe

so it is. Meg, my pet, if you'll just make the tea, while your unworthy father toasts the bacon, we shall be ready, immediate. It's a curious circumstance," said Trotty, proceeding in his cookery, with the assistance of the toasting-fork, "curious, but well known to my friends, that I never care, myself, for rashers, nor for tea. I like to see other people enjoy 'em," said Trotty, speaking very loud, to impress the fact upon his guest, "but to me, as food, they're disagreeable."

Yet Trotty sniffed the savour of the hissing bacon—ah!—as if he liked it; and when he poured the boiling water in the tea-pot, looked lovingly down into the depths of that snug cauldron, and suffered the fragrant steam to curl about his nose, and wreathe his head and face in a thick cloud. However, for all this, he neither ate nor drank, except at the very beginning, a mere morsel for form's sake, which he appeared to eat with infinite relish, but declared was perfectly uninteresting to him.

No. Trotty's occupation was, to see Will Fern and Lilian eat and drink; and so was Meg's. And never did spectators at a city dinner or court banquet find such high delight in seeing others feast: although it were a monarch or a pope: as those two did, in looking on that night. Meg smiled at Trotty, Trotty laughed at Meg. Meg shook her head, and made belief to clap her hands, applauding Trotty; Trotty conveyed, in dumb-show, unintelligible narratives of how and when and where he had found their visitors, to Meg; and they were happy. Very happy.

"Although," thought Trotty, sorrowfully, as he watched Meg's face; "that match is broken off, I see!"

"Now, I'll tell you what," said Trotty after tea. "The little one, she sleeps with Meg, I know."

"With good Meg!" cried the child, caressing her. "With Meg."

"That's right," said Trotty. "And I shouldn't wonder if she kiss Meg's father, won't she? *I*'m Meg's father."

Mightily delighted Trotty was, when the child went timidly towards him, and having kissed him, fell back upon Meg again.

"She's as sensible as Solomon," said Trotty. "Here we come and here we—no, we don't—I don't mean that—I—what was I saying, Meg, my precious?"

Meg looked towards their guest, who leaned upon her chair, and with his face turned from her, fondled the child's head, half hidden in her lap.

"To be sure," said Toby. "To be sure! I don't know what I'm rambling on about, to-night. My wits are wool-gathering, I think. Will Fern, you come along with me. You're tired to

death, and broken down for want of rest. You come along with me."

The man still played with the child's curls, still leaned upon Meg's chair, still turned away his face. He didn't speak, but in his rough coarse fingers, clenching and expanding in the fair hair of the child, there was an eloquence that said enough.

"Yes, yes," said Trotty, answering unconsciously what he saw expressed in his daughter's face. "Take her with you, Meg. Get her to bed. There! Now Will, I'll show you where you lie. It's not much of a place: only a loft: but, having a loft, I always say, is one of the great conveniences of living in a mews; and till this coach-house and stable gets a better let, we live here cheap. There's plenty of sweet hay up there, belonging to a neighbour; and it's as clean as hands, and Meg can make it. Cheer up! Don't give way. A new heart for a New Year, always!"

The hand released from the child's hair, had fallen, trembling, into Trotty's hand. So Trotty, talking without intermission, led him out as tenderly and easily as if he had been a child himself.

Returning before Meg, he listened for an instant at the door of her little chamber; an adjoining room. The child was murmuring a simple Prayer before lying down to sleep; and when she had remembered Meg's name, "Dearly, Dearly"—so her words ran—Trotty heard her stop and ask for his.

It was some short time before the foolish little old fellow could compose himself to mend the fire, and draw his chair to the warm hearth. But, when he had done so, and had trimmed the light, he took his newspaper from his pocket, and began to read. Carelessly at first, and skimming up and down the columns; but with an earnest and a sad attention, very soon.

For this same dreaded paper re-directed Trotty's thoughts into the channel they had taken all that day, and which the day's events had so marked out and shaped. His interest in the two wanderers had set him on another course of thinking, and a happier one, for the time; but being alone again, and reading of the crimes and violences of the people, he relapsed into his former train.

In this mood, he came to an account (and it was not the first he had ever read) of a woman who had laid her desperate hands not only on her own life but on that of her young child. A crime so terrible, and so revolting to his soul, dilated with the love of Meg, that he let the journal drop, and fell back in his chair appalled.

"Unnatural and cruel!" Toby cried. "Unnatural and cruel! None but people who were bad at heart, born bad: who had no

business on the earth: could do such deeds. It's too true, all I've heard to-day; too just, too full of proof. We're Bad!"

The Chimes took up the words so suddenly—burst out so loud, and clear, and sonorous—that the Bells seemed to strike him in his chair.

And what was that they said?

"Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you Toby! Toby Veck, Toby Veck, waiting for you Toby! Come and see us, come and see us, Drag him to us, drag him to us, Haunt and hunt him, haunt and hunt him, Break his slumbers, break his slumbers! Toby Veck Toby Veck, door open wide Toby, Toby Veck Toby Veck, door open wide Toby—" then fiercely back to their impetuous strain again, and ringing in the very bricks and plaster on the walls.

Toby listened. Fancy, fancy! His remorse for having run away from them that afternoon! No, no. Nothing of the kind. Again, again, and yet a dozen times again. "Haunt and hunt him, haunt and hunt him, Drag him to us, drag him to us!" Deafening the whole town!

"Meg," said Trotty softly: tapping at her door. "Do you hear anything?"

"I hear the Bells, father. Surely they're very loud to-night."

"Is she asleep?" said Toby, making an excuse for peeping in.

"So peacefully and happily! I can't leave her yet though, father. Look how she holds my hand!"

"Meg," whispered Trotty. "Listen to the Bells!"

She listened, with her face towards him all the time. But it underwent no change. She didn't understand them.

Trotty withdrew, resumed his seat by the fire, and once more listened by himself. He remained here a little time.

It was impossible to bear it; their energy was dreadful.

"If the tower-door is really open," said Toby, hastily laying aside his apron, but never thinking of his hat, "what's to hinder me from going up into the steeple and satisfying myself? If it's shut, I don't want any other satisfaction. That's enough."

He was pretty certain as he slipped out quietly into the street that he should find it shut and locked, for he knew the door well, and had so rarely seen it open, that he couldn't reckon above three times in all. It was a low arched portal, outside the church, in a dark nook behind a column; and had such great iron hinges, and such a monstrous lock, that there was more hinge and lock than door.

But what was his astonishment when, coming bare-headed to the church; and putting his hand into this dark nook, with a

certain misgiving that it might be unexpectedly seized, a a shivering propensity to draw it back again; he found th the door, which opened outwards, actually stood ajar!

He though on the first su prise, of goi back; or of ge ting a light, a companio but his coura aided him i mediately, a he determine to ascend alon

"What ha I to fear? said Trott "It's a church Besides, th ringers may b there, and ha forgotten shut the door

So he went in; feeling his wa as he went, like a blind man; f it was very dark. And very quie for the Chimes were silent.

The dust from the street ha blown into the recess; and lyin there, heaped up, made it so so and velvet-like to the foot, tha there was something startling eve in that. The narrow stair was s close to the door, too, that he stumble at the very first; and shutting th door upon himself, by striking i with his foot, and causing it t rebound back heavily, he couldn' open it again.

This was another reason, however, for going on. Trotty groped his way, and went on. Up, up, up, and round and round; and up up, up; higher, higher, higher up!

It was a disagreeable staircase for that groping work; so lo and narrow, that his groping hand was always touching something

often felt so like a man or ghostly figure standing up erect aking room for him to pass without discovery, that he would ie smooth wall upward searching for its face, and downward ing for its feet, while a chill tingling crept all over him. or thrice, a door or niche broke the monotonous surface; hen it seemed a gap as wide as the whole church; and he the brink of an abyss, and going to tumble headlong down; ie found the wall again.

ll up, up, up; and round and round; and up, up, up; higher, , higher up!

length, the dull and stifling atmosphere began to freshen: tly to feel quite windy: presently it blew so strong, that he hardly keep his legs. But he got to an arched window in wer, breast high, and holding tight, looked down upon the ops, on the smoking chimneys, on the blurr and blotch of (towards the place where Meg was wondering where he was lling to him perhaps), all kneaded up together in a leaven of nd darkness.

is was the belfry, where the ringers came. He had caught f one of the frayed ropes which hung down through apertures oaken roof. At first he started, thinking it was hair; then led at the very thought of waking the deep Bell. The Bells elves were higher. Higher, Trotty, in his fascination, or in ng out the spell upon him, groped his way. By ladders now, ilsomely, for it was steep, and not too certain holding for the

, up, up; and climb and clamber; up, up, up; higher, , higher up!

til, ascending through the floor, and pausing with his head aised above its beams, he came among the Bells. It was possible to make out their great shapes in the gloom; but they were. Shadowy, and dark, and dumb.

heavy sense of dread and loneliness fell instantly upon him, climbed into this airy nest of stone and metal. His head round and round. He listened, and then raised a wild oa!"

lloa! was mournfully protracted by the echoes.

ldy, confused, and out of breath, and frightened, Toby looked him vacantly, and sank down in a swoon.

THIRD QUARTER.

BLACK are the broodi
clouds and troubled t
deep waters, when the S
of Thought, first heavi
from a calm, gives up i
Dead. Monsters uncou
and wild, arise in p
mature, imperfect
surrection; the sever
parts and shapes
differe
things
joined a
mixed
chanc

and when, and how, and by what wonderful degrees, each separat
from each, and every sense and object of the mind resumes i
usual form and lives again, no man—though every man is eve
day the casket of this type of the Great Mystery—can tell.

So, when and how the darkness of the night-black steep

ed to shining light; when and how the solitary tower was
d with a myriad figures; when and how the whispered
nt and hunt him," breathing monotonously through his sleep
on, became a voice exclaiming in the waking ears of Trotty,
k his slumbers;" when and how he ceased to have a sluggish
onfused idea that such things were, companioning a host of
that were not; there are no dates or means to tell. But:
and standing on his feet upon the boards where he had
lain: he saw this Goblin Sight.
saw the tower, whither his charmed footsteps had brought
swarming with dwarf phantoms, spirits, elfin creatures of the
He saw them leaping, flying, dropping, pouring from the
without a pause. He saw them, round him on the ground;
him, in the air; clambering from him, by the ropes below;
g down upon him, from the massive iron-girded beams;
g in upon him, through the chinks and loopholes in the
; spreading away and away from him in enlarging circles, as
ater-ripples give place to a huge stone that suddenly comes
ng in among them. He saw them, of all aspects and all
. He saw them ugly, handsome, crippled, exquisitely
l. He saw them young, he saw them old, he saw them kind,
v them cruel, he saw them merry, he saw them grim; he saw
dance, and heard them sing; he saw them tear their hair, and
them howl. He saw the air thick with them. He saw them
and go, incessantly. He saw them riding downward, soaring
d, sailing off afar, perching near at hand, all restless and all
tly active. Stone, and brick, and slate, and tile, became trans-
to him as to them. He saw them *in* the houses, busy at
epers' beds. He saw them soothing people in their dreams; he
hem beating them with knotted whips; he saw them yelling
ir ears; he saw them playing softest music on their pillows;
them cheering some with the songs of birds and the perfume
vers; he saw them flashing awful faces on the troubled rest of
, from enchanted mirrors which they carried in their hands.
saw these creatures, not only among sleeping men but waking
active in pursuits irreconcileable with one another, and
sing or assuming natures the most opposite. He saw one
ng on innumerable wings to increase his speed; another
g himself with chains and weights to retard his. He saw
putting the hands of clocks forward, some putting the hands
cks backward, some endeavouring to stop the clock entirely.
w them representing, here a marriage ceremony, there a
l; in this chamber an election, in that a ball; everywhere,
s and untiring motion.

Bewildered by the host of shifting and extraordinary figures, a well as by the uproar of the Bells, which all this while wer ringing, Trotty clung to a wooden pillar for support, and turne his white face here and there, in mute and stunned astonishment

As he gazed, the Chimes stopped. Instantaneous change! Th whole swarm fainted! their forms collapsed, their speed deserte them; they sought to fly, but in the act of falling died and melte into air. No fresh supply succeeded them. One straggler leape down pretty briskly from the surface of the Great Bell, an alighted on his feet, but he was dead and gone before he coul turn round. Some few of the late company who had gambolled i the tower, remained there, spinning over and over a little longer but these became at every turn more faint, and few, and feebl and soon went the way of the rest. The last of all was one sma hunchback, who had got into an echoing corner, where he twirle and twirled, and floated by himself a long time; showing suc perseverance, that at last he dwindled to a leg and even to a foo before he finally retired; but he vanished in the end, and then th tower was silent.

Then and not before, did Trotty see in every Bell a bearde figure of the bulk and stature of the Bell—incomprehensibly, figure and the Bell itself. Gigantic, grave, and darkly watchful him, as he stood rooted to the ground.

Mysterious and awful figures! Resting on nothing; poised the night air of the tower, with their draped and hooded hea merged in the dim roof; motionless and shadowy. Shadowy a dark, although he saw them by some light belonging to themselv —none else was there—each with its muffled hand upon its gobl mouth.

He could not plunge down wildly through the opening in t floor, for all power of motion had deserted him. Otherwise would have done so—ay, would have thrown himself, headforemo from the steeple-top, rather than have seen them watching hi with eyes that would have waked and watched although the pup had been taken out.

Again, again, the dread and terror of the lonely place, and the wild and fearful night that reigned there, touched him like spectral hand. His distance from all help; the long, dark, windin ghost-beleaguered way that lay between him and the earth which men lived; his being high, high, high, up there, where had made him dizzy to see the birds fly in the day; cut off fr all good people, who at such an hour were safe at home and sleepi in their beds; all this struck coldly through him, not as a reflecti but a bodily sensation. Meantime his eyes and thoughts and fea

ixed upon the watchful figures; which, rendered unlike any
s of this world by the deep gloom and shade enwrapping and
ing them, as well as by their looks and forms and super-
l hovering above the floor, were nevertheless as plainly to be
s were the stalwart oaken frames, cross-pieces, bars and
, set up there to support the Bells. These hemmed them,
very forest of hewn timber; from the entanglements,
cies, and depths of which, as from among the boughs of a
vood blighted for their phantom use, they kept their darksome
nwinking watch.

blast of air—how cold and shrill!—came moaning through
wer. As it died away, the Great Bell, or the Goblin of the
Bell, spoke.

What visitor is this!" it said. The voice was low and deep,
rotty fancied that it sounded in the other figures as well.

thought my name was called by the Chimes!" said Trotty,
g his hands in an attitude of supplication. "I hardly know
am here, or how I came. I have listened to the Chimes
many years. They have cheered me often."

And you have thanked them?" said the Bell.

A thousand times!" cried Trotty.

How?"

am a poor man," faltered Trotty, "and could only thank
in words."

And always so?" inquired the Goblin of the Bell. "Have you
done us wrong in words?"

No!" cried Trotty eagerly.

Never done us foul, and false, and wicked wrong, in words?"
ed the Goblin of the Bell.

otty was about to answer, "Never!" But he stopped, and
onfused.

The voice of Time," said the Phantom, "cries to man,
ice! Time is for his advancement and improvement; for
eater worth, his greater happiness, his better life; his pro-
onward to that goal within its knowledge and its view, and
ere, in the period when Time and He began. Ages of dark-
wickedness, and violence, have come and gone: millions
ntable, have suffered, lived, and died: to point the way
him. Who seeks to turn him back, or stay him on his
, arrests a mighty engine which will strike the meddler dead;
e the fiercer and the wilder, ever, for its momentary check!"

never did so, to my knowledge, Sir," said Trotty. "It was
by accident if I did. I wouldn't go to do it, I'm sure."

Who puts into the mouth of Time, or of its servants," said the

Goblin of the Bell, "a cry of lamentation for days which have h
their trial and their failure, and have left deep traces of it whi
the blind may see—a cry that only serves the Present Time,
showing men how much it needs their help when any ears can list
to regrets for such a Past—who does this, does a wrong. And y
have done that wrong to us, the Chimes."

Trotty's first excess of fear was gone. But he had felt tende
and gratefully towards the Bells, as you have seen; and when
heard himself arraigned as one who had offended them so weighti
his heart was touched with penitence and grief.

"If you knew," said Trotty, clasping his hands earnestly—"
perhaps you do know—if you know how often you have kept
company; how often you have cheered me up when I've been lo
how you were quite the plaything of my little daughter Meg (alm
the only one she ever had) when first her mother died, and she a
me were left alone—you won't bear malice for a hasty word!"

"Who hears in us, the Chimes, one note bespeaking disrega
or stern regard, of any hope, or joy, or pain, or sorrow, of the ma
sorrowed throng; who hears us make response to any creed th
gauges human passions and affections, as it gauges the amount
miserable food on which humanity may pine and wither; does
wrong. That wrong you have done us!" said the Bell.

"I have!" said Trotty. "O forgive me!"

"Who hears us echo the dull vermin of the earth: the Putt
Down of crushed and broken natures, formed to be raised up hig
than such maggots of the time can crawl or can conceive," pursu
the Goblin of the Bell: "who does so, does us wrong. And y
have done us wrong!"

"Not meaning it," said Trotty. "In my ignorance. N
meaning it!"

"Lastly and most of all," pursued the Bell. "Who turns
back upon the fallen and disfigured of his kind; abandons them
Vile; and does not trace and track with pitying eyes the unfen
precipice by which they fell from Good—grasping in their fall so
tufts and shreds of that lost soil, and clinging to them still wh
bruised and dying in the gulf below; does wrong to Heaven a
Man, to Time and to Eternity. And you have done that wrong

"Spare me," cried Trotty, falling on his knees; "for Merc
sake!"

"Listen!" said the Shadow.

"Listen!" cried the other Shadows.

"Listen!" said a clear and childlike voice, which Tro
thought he recognised as having heard before.

The organ sounded faintly in the church below. Swelling

es, the melody ascended to the roof, and filled the choir and
Expanding more and more, it rose up, up; up, up; higher,
r, higher up; awakening agitated hearts within the burly piles
k, the hollow bells, the iron-bound doors, the stairs of solid
; until the tower walls were insufficient to contain it, and it
l into the sky.
o wonder that an old man's breast could not contain a sound so
nd mighty. It broke from that weak prison in a rush of tears;
rotty put his hands before his face.
Listen!" said the Shadow.
Listen!" said the other Shadows.
Listen!" said the child's voice.
solemn strain of blended voices, rose into the tower.
was a very low and mournful strain: a Dirge: and as he
ed, Trotty heard his child among the singers.
She is dead!" exclaimed the old man. "Meg is dead! Her
calls to me. I hear it!"
The Spirit of your child bewails the dead, and mingles with
lead—dead hopes, dead fancies, dead imaginings of youth,"
ned the Bell, "but she is living. Learn from her life, a living
. Learn from the creature dearest to your heart, how bad the
re born. See every bud and leaf plucked one by one from off
airest stem, and know how bare and wretched it may be.
w her! To desperation!"
ach of the shadowy figures stretched its right arm forth, and
ed downward.
The Spirit of the Chimes is your companion," said the figure.
! It stands behind you!"
rotty turned, and saw—the child! The child Will Fern had
d in the street; the child whom Meg had watched, but now,
!
I carried her myself, to-night," said Trotty. "In these arms!"
Show him what he calls himself," said the dark figures, one
ll.
he tower opened at his feet. He looked down, and beheld
vn form, lying at the bottom, on the outside: crushed and
nless.
No more a living man!" cried Trotty. "Dead!"
Dead!" said the figures all together.
Gracious Heaven! And the New Year——"
Past," said the figures.
What!" he cried, shuddering. "I missed my way, and
g on the outside of this tower in the dark, fell down—a year

"Nine years ago!" replied the figures.

As they gave the answer, they recalled their outstretched han and where their figures had been, there the Bells were.

And they rang; their time being come again. And once ag vast multitudes of phantoms sprang into existence; once ag were incoherently engaged, as they had been before; once ag faded on the stopping of the chimes; and dwindled into nothi

"What are these?" he asked his guide. "If I am not m what are these?"

"Spirits of the Bells. Their sound upon the air," returned child. "They take such shapes and occupations as the hopes thoughts of mortals, and the recollections they have stored up, g them."

"And you," said Trotty wildly. "What are you?"

"Hush, hush!" returned the child. "Look here!"

In a poor, mean room: working at the same kind of embroid which he had often, often seen before her; Meg, his own d daughter, was presented to his view. He made no effort to imp his kisses on her face; he did not strive to clasp her to his lo heart; he knew that such endearments were for him no m But he held his trembling breath; and brushed away the blind tears, that he might look upon her; that he might only see her

Ah! Changed. Changed. The light of the clear eye, dimmed. The bloom, how faded from the cheek. Beautiful was, as she had ever been, but Hope, Hope, Hope, oh where the fresh Hope that had spoken to him like a voice!

She looked up from her work, at a companion. Following eyes, the old man started back.

In the woman grown, he recognised her at a glance. In long silken hair, he saw the self-same curls; around the lips, child's expression lingering still. See! In the eyes, now tur inquiringly on Meg, there shone the very look that scanned t features when he brought her home!

Then what was this, beside him!

Looking with awe into its face, he saw a something reig there: a lofty something, undefined and indistinct, which mad hardly more than a remembrance of that child—as yonder fi might be—yet it was the same: the same: and wore the dres

Hark. They were speaking!

"Meg," said Lilian, hesitating. "How often you raise head from your work to look at me!"

"Are my looks so altered, that they frighten you?" asked M

"Nay, dear! But you smile at that, yourself! Why smile, when you look at me, Meg?"

do so. Do I not?" she answered: smiling on her.
Iow you do," said Lilian, "but not usually. When you I'm busy, and don't see you, you look so anxious and so ful, that I hardly like to raise my eyes. There is little cause iling in this hard and toilsome life, but you were once so il."
Am I not now!" cried Meg, speaking in a tone of strange and rising to embrace her. "Do *I* make our weary life more to you, Lilian!"
Tou have been the only thing that made it life," said Lilian, tly kissing her; "sometimes the only thing that made me o live so, Meg. Such work, such work! So many hours, so days, so many long, long nights of hopeless, cheerless, never- work—not to heap up riches, not to live grandly or gaily, live upon enough, however coarse; but to earn bare bread; ape together just enough to toil upon, and want upon, and alive in us the consciousness of our hard fate! Oh Meg," she raised her voice, and twined her arms about her as she like one in pain. "How can the cruel world go round, and o look upon such lives!"
illy!" said Meg, soothing her, and putting back her hair her wet face. "Why Lilly! You! So pretty and so !"
Oh Meg!" she interrupted, holding her at arm's-length, and g in her face imploringly. "The worst of all, the worst of Strike me old, Meg! Wither me and shrivel me, and free om the dreadful thoughts that tempt me in my youth!"
otty turned to look upon his guide. But the Spirit of the had taken flight. Was gone.
ither did he himself remain in the same place; for Sir Joseph y, Friend and Father of the Poor, held a great festivity at y Hall, in honour of the natal day of Lady Bowley; and as Bowley had been born on New Year's Day (which the local apers considered an especial pointing of the finger of Provi- to number One, as Lady Bowley's destined figure in Creation), on a New Year's Day that this festivity took place.
wley Hall was full of visitors. The red-faced gentleman was Mr. Filer was there, the great Alderman Cute was there— nan Cute had a sympathetic feeling with great people, and nsiderably improved his acquaintance with Sir Joseph Bowley strength of his attentive letter: indeed had become quite a of the family since then—and many guests were there. 's ghost was there, wandering about, poor phantom, drearily; oking for its guide.

There was to be a great dinner in the Great Hall. At whic
Sir Joseph Bowley, in his celebrated character of Friend a
Father of the Poor, was to make his great speech. Certain plu
puddings were to be eaten by his Friends and Children in anoth
Hall first; and, at a given signal, Friends and Children flockin
in among their Friends and Fathers, were to form a fami
assemblage, with not one manly eye therein unmoistened b
emotion.

But there was more than this to happen. Even more than thi
Sir Joseph Bowley, Baronet and Member of Parliament, was to pl
a match at skittles—real skittles—with his tenants.

"Which quite reminds one," said Alderman Cute, "of the da
of old King Hal, stout King Hal, bluff King Hal. Ah. Fi
character!"

"Very," said Mr. Filer, dryly. "For marrying women a
murdering 'em. Considerably more than the average number
wives by the bye."

"You'll marry the beautiful ladies, and not murder 'em, eh!
said Alderman Cute to the heir of Bowley, aged twelve. "Swe
boy! We shall have this little gentleman in Parliament now
said the Alderman, holding him by the shoulders, and looking
reflective as he could, "before we know where we are. We sh
hear of his successes at the poll; his speeches in the House; h
overtures from Governments; his brilliant achievements of
kinds; ah! we shall make our little orations about him in t
Common Council, I'll be bound; before we have time to lo
about us!"

"Oh, the difference of shoes and stockings!" Trotty though
But his heart yearned towards the child, for the love of those sa
shoeless and stockingless boys, predestined (by the Alderman)
turn out bad, who might have been the children of poor Meg.

"Richard," moaned Trotty, roaming among the company,
and fro; "where is he? I can't find Richard! Where
Richard?"

Not likely to be there, if still alive! But Trotty's grief a
solitude confused him; and he still went wandering among t
gallant company, looking for his guide, and saying, "Where
Richard? Show me Richard!"

He was wandering thus, when he encountered Mr. Fish, t
confidential Secretary: in great agitation.

"Bless my heart and soul!" cried Mr. Fish. "Where's Ald
man Cute? Has anybody seen the Alderman?"

"Seen the Alderman? Oh dear! Who could ever help seei
the Alderman? He was so considerate, so affable; he bore

in mind the natural desire of folks to see him; that if he fault, it was the being constantly On View. And wherever reat people were, there, to be sure, attracted by the kindred thy between great souls, was Cute.

veral voices cried that he was in the circle round Sir Joseph. ish made way there; found him; and took him secretly into low near at hand. Trotty joined them. Not of his own . He felt that his steps were led in that direction.

My dear Alderman Cute," said Mr. Fish. "A little more ay. The most dreadful circumstance has occurred. I have oment received the intelligence. I think it will be best not uaint Sir Joseph with it till the day is over. You understand oseph, and will give me your opinion. The most frightful plorable event!"

Fish!" returned the Alderman. "Fish! My good fellow, is the matter? Nothing revolutionary, I hope! No—no pted interference with the magistrates?"

Deedles, the banker," gasped the Secretary. "Deedles ers—who was to have been here to-day—high in office in the miths' Company——"

Not stopped!" exclaimed the Alderman. "It can't be!"

Shot himself."

Good God!"

Put a double-barrelled pistol to his mouth, in his own counting-" said Mr. Fish, "and blew his brains out. No motive. ely circumstances!"

Circumstances!" exclaimed the Alderman. "A man of noble e. One of the most respectable of men. Suicide, Mr. Fish! s own hand!"

This very morning," returned Mr. Fish.

Oh the brain, the brain!" exclaimed the pious Alderman, up his hands. "Oh the nerves, the nerves; the mysteries s machine called Man! Oh the little that unhinges it: poor res that we are! Perhaps a dinner, Mr. Fish. Perhaps the ct of his son, who, I have heard, ran very wild, and was in abit of drawing bills upon him without the least authority! st respectable man. One of the most respectable men I ever ! A lamentable instance, Mr. Fish. A public calamity! I make a point of wearing the deepest mourning. A most table man! But there is One above. We must submit, Mr. We must submit!"

hat, Alderman! No word of Putting Down? Remember, e, your high moral boast and pride. Come, Alderman! ce those scales. Throw me into this, the empty one, No Dinner,

and Nature's founts in some poor woman, dried by starving mis and rendered obdurate to claims for which her offspring authority in holy mother Eve. Weigh me the two, you Da going to judgment, when your day shall come! Weigh them, the eyes of suffering thousands, audience (not unmindful) of grim farce you play! Or supposing that you strayed from y five wits—it's not so far to go, but that it might be—and hands upon that throat of yours, warning your fellows (if you h a fellow) how they croak their comfortable wickedness to rav heads and stricken hearts. What then?

The words rose up in Trotty's breast, as if they had been spo by some other voice within him. Alderman Cute pledged him to Mr. Fish that he would assist him in breaking the melanch catastrophe to Sir Joseph, when the day was over. Then, be they parted, wringing Mr. Fish's hand in bitterness of soul, said, "The most respectable of men!" And added that he har knew: not even he: why such afflictions were allowed on earth

"It's almost enough to make one think, if one didn't kn better," said Alderman Cute, "that at times some motion o capsizing nature was going on in things, which affected the gen economy of the social fabric. Deedles Brothers!"

The skittle-playing came off with immense success. Sir Jos knocked the pins about quite skilfully; Master Bowley took innings at a shorter distance also; and everybody said that n when a Baronet and the Son of a Baronet played at skittles, country was coming round again, as fast as it could come.

At its proper time, the Banquet was served up. Tro involuntarily repaired to the Hall with the rest, for he felt h self conducted thither by some stronger impulse than his own will. The sight was gay in the extreme; the ladies were v handsome; the visitors delighted, cheerful, and good-tempe When the lower doors were opened, and the people flocked in their rustic dresses, the beauty of the spectacle was at its heig but Trotty only murmured more and more, "Where is Richa He should help and comfort her! I can't see Richard!"

There had been some speeches made; and Lady Bowley's he had been proposed; and Sir Joseph Bowley had returned than and had made his great speech, showing by various pieces evidence that he was the born Friend and Father, and so for and had given as a Toast, his Friends and Children, and Dignity of Labour; when a slight disturbance at the bottom the Hall attracted Toby's notice. After some confusion, noise, opposition, one man broke through the rest, and stood forward himself.

Not Richard. No. But one whom he had thought of, and ad looked for, many times. In a scantier supply of light, he ight have doubted the identity of that worn man, so old, and ey, and bent; but with a blaze of lamps upon his gnarled and otted head, he knew Will Fern as soon as he stepped forth.

"What is this!" exclaimed Sir Joseph, rising. "Who gave his man admittance? This is a criminal from prison! Mr. Fish, ir, *will* you have the goodness——"

"A minute!" said Will Fern. "A minute! My Lady, you as born on this day along with a New Year. Get me a minute's ave to speak."

She made some intercession for him. Sir Joseph took his seat gain, with native dignity.

The ragged visitor—for he was miserably dressed—looked round pon the company, and made his homage to them with a humble ow.

"Gentlefolks!" he said. "You've drunk the Labourer. Look t me!"

"Just come from jail," said Mr. Fish.

"Just come from jail," said Will. "And neither for the rst time, nor the second, nor the third, nor yet the fourth."

Mr. Filer was heard to remark testily, that four times was over he average; and he ought to be ashamed of himself.

"Gentlefolks!" repeated Will Fern. "Look at me! You e I'm at the worst. Beyond all hurt or harm; beyond your lp; for the time when your kind words or kind actions could ve done ME good,"—he struck his hand upon his breast, and ook his head, "is gone, with the scent of last year's beans or lover on the air. Let me say a word for these," pointing to the bouring people in the Hall; "and when you're met together, ar the real Truth spoke out for once."

"There's not a man here," said the host, "who would have m for a spokesman."

"Like enough, Sir Joseph. I believe it. Not the less true, rhaps, is what I say. Perhaps that's a proof on it. Gentlefolks, 've lived many a year in this place. You may see the cottage om the sunk fence over yonder. I've seen the ladies draw it in eir books, a hundred times. It looks well in a picter, I've erd say; but there an't weather in picters, and maybe 'tis ter for that, than for a place to live in. Well! I lived there. ow hard—how bitter hard, I lived there, I won't say. Any y in the year, and every day, you can judge for your own ives."

He spoke as he had spoken on the night when Trotty found

him in the street. His voice was deeper and more husky, a had a trembling in it now and then; but he never raised passionately, and seldom lifted it above the firm stern level of homely facts he stated.

"'Tis harder than you think for, gentlefolks, to grow up decen commonly decent: in such a place. That I growed up a man a not a bru says so thing for —as I then. A am no there's thing can said for or done me. I past it."

"I glad th man has tered," observed Sir Joseph, looki round serenely. "Don't disturb hi It appears to be Ordained. He is Example: a living example. I ho and trust, and confidently expect, t it will not be lost upon my Frie here."

"I dragged on," said Fern, afte moment's silence. "Somehow. Neith me nor any other man knows ho but so heavy, that I couldn't put cheerful face upon it, or make beli that I was anything but what I w Now, gentlemen—you gentlemen t sits at Sessions—when you see a m with discontent writ on his face, says to one another, 'He's suspicio I has my doubts,' says you, 'about Will Fern. Watch t fellow!' I don't say, gentlemen, it an't quite nat'ral, but I 'tis so; and from that hour, whatever Will Fern does, or lets al —all one—it goes against him."

Alderman Cute stuck his thumbs in his waistcoat-pockets, leaning back in his chair, and smiling, winked at a neighbour

ndelier. As much as to say, "Of course! I told you so. T
mon cry! Lord bless you, we are up to all this sort of thi
myself and human nature."

"Now, gentlemen," said Will Fern, holding out his hands, a
hing for an instant in his haggard face, "see how your la
made to trap and hunt us when we're brought to this. I tr
live elsewhere. And I'm a vagabond. To jail with him!
nes back here. I goes a-nutting in your woods, and breaks
o don't?—a limber branch or two. To jail with him! One
r keepers sees me in the broad day, near my own patch
den, with a gun. To jail with him! I has a nat'ral ang
rd with that man, when I'm free again. To jail with him!
s a stick. To jail with him! I eats a rotten apple or a turn
jail with him! It's twenty mile away; and coming back,
s a trifle on the road. To jail with him! At last, t
stable, the keeper—anybody—finds me anywhere, a-doing ar
ng. To jail with him, for he's a vagrant, and a jail-bird know
l the jail's the only home he's got."

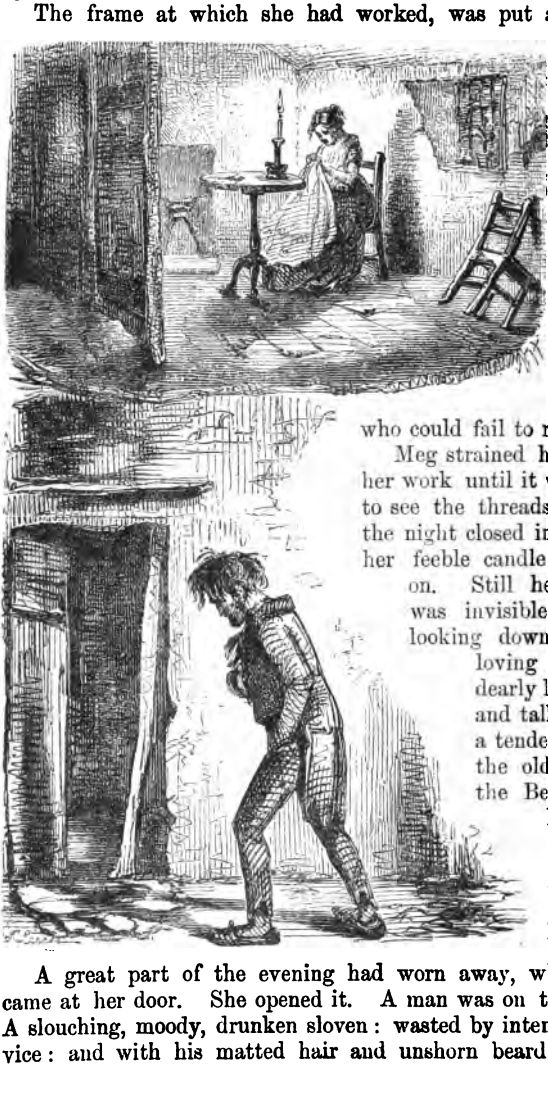
The Alderman nodded sagaciously, as who should say, "A ve
d home too!"

"Do I say this to serve MY cause!" cried Fern. "Who c
e me back my liberty, who can give me back my good nan
o can give me back my innocent niece? Not all the Lords a
dies in wide England. But gentlemen, gentlemen, dealing wi
er men like me, begin at the right end. Give us, in mer
ter homes when we're a-lying in our cradles; give us bet
d when we're a-working for our lives; give us kinder laws
ng us back when we're a-going wrong; and don't set Jail, Ja
l, afore us, everywhere we turn. There an't a condescensi
I can show the Labourer then, that he won't take, as ready a
grateful as a man can be; for, he has a patient, peaceful, willi
rt. But you must put his rightful spirit in him first; f
ether he's a wreck and ruin such as me, or is like one of the
t stand here now, his spirit is divided from you at this tin
ng it back, gentlefolks, bring it back! Bring it back, afo
day comes when even his Bible changes in his altered mir
l the words seem to him to read, as they have sometimes re
my own eyes—in Jail: 'Whither thou goest, I can Not g
re thou lodgest, I do Not lodge; thy people are Not my peopl
r thy God my God!'"

A sudden stir and agitation took place in the Hall. Trot
ught at first, that several had risen to eject the man; and hen
change in its appearance. But another moment showed h
t the room and all the company had vanished from his sigl

and that his daughter was again before him, seated at her wo
But in a poorer, meaner garret than before; and with no Lil
by her side.

The frame at which she had worked, was put away upo
shelf a
covered
The ch
in whi
she had
was tur
against
wall.
history
written
these lit
things,
in Meg
grief - wo
face. O



who could fail to read it!

Meg strained her eyes up
her work until it was too da
to see the threads; and wh
the night closed in, she light
her feeble candle and work
on. Still her old fath
was invisible about h
looking down upon h
loving her — h
dearly loving her
and talking to her
a tender voice ab
the old times, a
the Bells. Thou
he knew, p
T r o t t
though
knew s
could n
hear him.

A great part of the evening had worn away, when a kno
came at her door. She opened it. A man was on the thresho
A slouching, moody, drunken sloven: wasted by intemperance a
vice: and with his matted hair and unshorn beard in wild d

r : but with some traces on him, too, of having been a man of
proportion and good features in his youth.

He stopped until he had her leave to enter ; and she, retiring a
or two from the open door, silently and sorrowfully looked
n him. Trotty had his wish. He saw Richard.

'May I come in, Margaret?"

'Yes! Come in. Come in!"

t was well that Trotty knew him before he spoke ; for
any doubt remaining on his mind, the harsh discordant voice
ld have persuaded him that it was not Richard but some other

There were but two chairs in the room. She gave him hers,
stood at some short distance from him, waiting to hear what
ad to say.

He sat, however, staring vacantly at the floor ; with a lustreless
stupid smile. A spectacle of such deep degradation, of such
ct hopelessness, of such a miserable downfall, that she put her
ls before her face and turned away, lest he should see how
h it moved her.

Roused by the rustling of her dress, or some such trifling sound,
ifted his head, and began to speak as if there had been no
e since he entered.

Still at work, Margaret? You work late."

I generally do."

And early?"

And early."

So she said. She said you never tired ; or never owned that
tired. Not all the time you lived together. Nor even when
fainted, between work and fasting. But I told you that, the
time I came."

You did," she answered. "And I implored you to tell me
ing more ; and you made me a solemn promise, Richard, that
never would."

A solemn promise," he repeated, with a drivelling laugh and
nt stare. "A solemn promise. To be sure. A solemn
ise!" Awakening, as it were, after a time ; in the same
ner as before ; he said with sudden animation,

How can I help it, Margaret? What am I to do? She has
to me again!"

Again!" cried Meg, clasping her hands. "O, does she think
e so often! Has she been again!"

Twenty times again," said Richard. "Margaret, she haunts
She comes behind me in the street, and thrusts it in my
. I hear her foot upon the ashes when I'm at my work (ah,

ha! that an't often), and before I can turn my head, her voice i in my ear, saying, 'Richard, don't look round. For Heaven's lov give her this!' She brings it where I live; she sends it in letters she taps at the window and lays it on the sill. What *can* I do Look at it!"

He held out in his hand a little purse, and chinked the mone it enclosed.

"Hide it," said Meg. "Hide it! When she comes agai tell her, Richard, that I love her in my soul. That I never li down to sleep, but I bless her, and pray for her. That, in m solitary work, I never cease to have her in my thoughts. Th she is with me, night and day. That if I died to-morrow, I woul remember her with my last breath. But that I cannot look upo it!"

He slowly recalled his hand, and crushing the purse togethe said with a kind of drowsy thoughtfulness:

"I told her so. I told her so, as plain as words could speak I've taken this gift back and left it at her door, a dozen time since then. But when she came at last, and stood before me, fac to face, what could I do?"

"You saw her!" exclaimed Meg. "You saw her! Oh, Lilia my sweet girl! Oh, Lilian, Lilian!"

"I saw her," he went on to say, not answering, but engaged i the same slow pursuit of his own thoughts. "There she stood trembling! 'How does she look, Richard? Does she ever speak of me? Is she thinner? My old place at the table: what's i my old place? And the frame she taught me our old work on— has she burnt it, Richard!' There she was. I heard her say it."

Meg checked her sobs, and with the tears streaming from he eyes, bent over him to listen. Not to lose a breath.

With his arms resting on his knees; and stooping forward i his chair, as if what he said were written on the ground in som half legible character, which it was his occupation to decipher an connect; he went on.

"'Richard, I have fallen very low; and you may guess ho much I have suffered in having this sent back, when I can bea to bring it in my hand to you. But you loved her once, even i my memory, dearly. Others stepped in between you; fears, an jealousies, and doubts, and vanities, estranged you from her; bu you did love her, even in my memory!' I suppose I did," he said interrupting himself for a moment. "I did! That's neither her nor there. 'O Richard, if you ever did; if you have any memor for what is gone and lost, take it to her once more. Once more Tell her how I begged and prayed. Tell her how I laid my hea

your shoulder, where her own head might have lain, and was
mble to you, Richard. Tell her that you looked into my face,
aw the beauty which she used to praise, all gone: all gone:
n its place, a poor, wan, hollow cheek, that she would weep
e. Tell her everything, and take it back, and she will not
e again. She will not have the heart!'"
o he sat musing, and repeating the last words, until he woke
, and rose.
You won't take it, Margaret."
ne shook her head, and motioned an entreaty to him to leave

Good night, Margaret."
Good night!"
e turned to look upon her; struck by her sorrow, and perhaps
ne pity for himself which trembled in her voice. It was a
and rapid action; and for the moment some flash of his old
ng kindled in his form. In the next he went as he had come.
lid this glimmer of a quenched fire seem to light him to a
er sense of his debasement.
any mood, in any grief, in any torture of the mind or body,
work must be done. She sat down to her task, and plied
Night, midnight. Still she worked.
ne had a meagre fire, the night being very cold; and rose at
vals to mind it. The Chimes rang half-past twelve while she
thus engaged; and when they ceased she heard a gentle
king at the door. Before she could so much as wonder who
here, at that unusual hour, it opened.
h Youth and Beauty, happy as ye should be, look at this!
Youth and Beauty, blest and blessing all within your reach,
working out the ends of your Beneficent Creator, look at

ne saw the entering figure; screamed its name; cried
an!"
was swift, and fell upon its knees before her: clinging to her

Up, dear! Up! Lilian! My own dearest!"
Never more, Meg; never more! Here! Here! Close to
holding to you, feeling your dear breath upon my face!"
Sweet Lilian! Darling Lilian! Child of my heart—no
er's love can be more tender—lay your head upon my
t!"
Never more, Meg. Never more! When I first looked into
face, you knelt before me. On my knees before you, let me
Let it be here!"

"You have come back. My Treasure! We will live togeth
work together, hope together, die together!"

"Ah! Kiss my lips, Meg; fold your arms about me; pr
me to your bosom; look kindly on me; but don't raise me.
it be here. Let me see the last of your dear face upon my knee

Oh Youth and Beauty, happy as ye should be, look at th
Oh Youth and Beauty, working out the ends of your Benefic
Creator, look at this!

"Forgive me, Meg! So dear, so dear! Forgive me! I kn
you do, I see you do, but say so, Meg!"

She said so, with her lips on Lilian's cheek. And with
arms twined round—she knew it now—a broken heart.

"His blessing on you, dearest love. Kiss me once more!
suffered her to sit beside His feet, and dry them with her ha
Oh Meg, what Mercy and Compassion!"

As she died, the Spirit of the child returning, innocent a
radiant, touched the old man with its hand, and beckoned hi
away.

FOURTH QUARTER.
SOME new remembrance of the ghostly figures in the Bell; some faint impression of the ringing of the Chimes; some giddy consciousness of having seen the swarm of phantoms reproduced and repro-

until the recollection of them lost itself in the confusion of umbers; some hurried knowledge, how conveyed to him he not, that more years had passed; and Trotty, with the Spirit child attending him, stood looking on at mortal company.

company, rosy-cheeked company, comfortable company. were but two, but they were red enough for ten. They sat

"You're in spirits, Tugby, my dear," observed his wife.

The firm was Tugby, late Chickenstalker.

"No," said Tugby. "No. Not particular. I'm a litt elewated. The muffins came so pat!"

With that he chuckled until he was black in the face; a had so much ado to become any other colour, that his fat legs to the strangest excursions into the air. Nor were they reduced anything like decorum until Mrs. Tugby had thumped h violently on the back, and shaken him as if he were a great bott

"Good gracious, goodness, lord-a-mercy bless and save t man!" cried Mrs. Tugby, in great terror. "What's he doing?"

Mr. Tugby wiped his eyes, and faintly repeated that he fou himself a little elewated.

"Then don't be so again, that's a dear good soul," said M Tugby, "if you don't want to frighten me to death, with y struggling and fighting!"

Mr. Tugby said he wouldn't, but his whole existence was fight; in which, if any judgment might be founded on constantly-increasing shortness of his breath, and the deepen purple of his face, he was always getting the worst of it.

"So it's blowing, and sleeting, and threatening snow; and dark, and very cold: is it, my dear?" said Mr. Tugby, looking the fire, and reverting to the cream and marrow of his tempor elevation.

"Hard weather indeed," returned his wife, shaking her head

"Ay, ay! Years," said Mr. Tugby, "are like Christians that respect. Some of 'em die hard; some of 'em die easy. T one hasn't many days to run, and is making a fight for it. I l him all the better. There's a customer, my love!"

Attentive to the rattling door, Mrs. Tugby had already risen

"Now then!" said that lady, passing out into the little sh "What's wanted? Oh! I beg your pardon, Sir, I'm sure. didn't think it was you."

She made this apology to a gentleman in black, who, with wristbands tucked up, and his hat cocked loungingly on one s and his hands in his pockets, sat down astride on the table-b barrel, and nodded in return.

"This is a bad business up stairs, Mrs. Tugby," said gentleman. "The man can't live."

"Not the back-attic can't!" cried Tugby, coming out into shop to join the conference.

"The back-attic, Mr. Tugby," said the gentleman, "is com down stairs fast; and will be below the basement very soon."

Looking by turns at Tugby and his wife, he sounded the ba

ith his knuckles for the depth of beer, and having found it, ayed a tune upon the empty part.

"The back-attic, Mr. Tugby," said the gentleman: Tugby ving stood in silent consternation for some time: "is Going."

"Then," said Tugby, turning to his wife, "He must Go, you ow, before he's Gone."

"I don't think you can move him," said the gentleman, aking his head. "I wouldn't take the responsibility of saying could be done myself. You had better leave him where he is. e can't live long."

"It's the only subject," said Tugby, bringing the butter-scale wn upon the counter with a crash, by weighing his fist on it, that we've ever had a word upon; she and me; and look what comes to! He's going to die here, after all. Going to die on the premises. Going to die in our house!"

"And where should he have died, Tugby?" cried his wife.

"In the workhouse," he returned. "What are workhouses ade for?"

"Not for that," said Mrs. Tugby, with great energy. "Not that. Neither did I marry you for that. Don't think it, gby. I won't have it. I won't allow it. I'd be separated st, and never see your face again. When my widow's name od over that door, as it did for many years: this house being own as Mrs. Chickenstalker's far and wide, and never known t to its honest credit and its good report: when my widow's me stood over that door, Tugby, I knew him as a handsome, ady, manly, independent youth; I knew her as the sweetest- oking, sweetest-tempered girl, eyes ever saw; I knew her father oor old creetur, he fell down from the steeple walking in his ep, and killed himself), for the simplest, hardest-working, ldest-hearted man, that ever drew the breath of life; and when turn them out of house and home, may angels turn me out of eaven. As they would! And serve me right!"

Her old face, which had been a plump and dimpled one before e changes which had come to pass, seemed to shine out of her as e said these words; and when she dried her eyes, and shook r head and her handkerchief at Tugby, with an expression of mness which it was quite clear was not to be easily resisted, otty said, "Bless her! Bless her!"

Then he listened, with a panting heart, for what should follow. nowing nothing yet, but that they spoke of Meg.

If Tugby had been a little elevated in the parlour, he more an balanced that account by being not a little depressed in the op, where he now stood staring at his wife, without attempting

a reply; secretly conveying, however—either in a fit of abstractio or as a precautionary measure—all the money from the till int his own pockets, as he looked at her.

The gentleman upon the table-beer cask, who appeared to b some authorised medical attendant upon the poor, was far too wa accustomed, evidently, to little differences of opinion between ma and wife, to interpose any remark in this instance. He sat softl whistling, and turning little drops of beer out of the tap upon th ground, until there was a perfect calm: when he raised his hea and said to Mrs. Tugby, late Chickenstalker:

"There's something interesting about the woman, even no How did she come to marry him?"

"Why that," said Mrs. Tugby, taking a seat near him, "is n the least cruel part of her story, Sir. You see they kept compan she and Richard, many years ago. When they were a young an beautiful couple, everything was settled, and they were to ha been married on a New Year's Day. But, somehow, Richard g it into his head, through what the gentlemen told him, that might do better, and that he'd soon repent it, and that she was good enough for him, and that a young man of spirit had business to be married. And the gentlemen frightened her, a made her melancholy, and timid of his deserting her, and of h children coming to the gallows, and of its being wicked to be m and wife, and a good deal more of it. And in short, they linger and lingered, and their trust in one another was broken, and so last was the match. But the fault was his. She would ha married him, Sir, joyfully. I've seen her heart swell, many tim afterwards, when he passed her in a proud and careless way; a never did a woman grieve more truly for a man, than she Richard when he first went wrong."

"Oh! he went wrong, did he?" said the gentleman, pulling o the vent-peg of the table-beer, and trying to peep down into t barrel through the hole.

"Well, Sir, I don't know that he rightly understood himse you see. I think his mind was troubled by their having bro with one another; and that but for being ashamed before t gentlemen, and perhaps for being uncertain too, how she mig take it, he'd have gone through any suffering or trial to have h Meg's promise and Meg's hand again. That's my belief. H never said so; more's the pity! He took to drinking, idling, b companions: all the fine resources that were to be so much bet for him than the Home he might have had. He lost his loo his character, his health, his strength, his friends, his work: eve thing!"

"He didn't lose everything, Mrs. Tugby," returned the gentleman, "because he gained a wife; and I want to know how he gained her."

"I'm coming to it, Sir, in a moment. This went on for years and years; he sinking lower and lower; she enduring, poor thing, miseries enough to wear her life away. At last, he was so cast down, and cast out, that no one would employ or notice him; and doors were shut upon him, go where he would. Applying from place to place, and door to door; and coming for the hundredth time to one gentleman who had often and often tried him (he was a good workman to the very end); that gentleman, who knew his story, said, 'I believe you are incorrigible; there is only one person in the world who has a chance of reclaiming you; ask me to trust you no more, until she tries to do it.' Something like that, in his anger and vexation."

"Ah!" said the gentleman. "Well?"

"Well Sir, he went to her, and kneeled to her; said it was; said it ever had been so; and made a prayer to her to save him."

"And she—Don't distress yourself, Mrs. Tugby."

"She came to me that night to ask me about living here. 'What he was once to me,' she said, 'is buried in a grave; side by side with what I was to him. But I have thought of this; and I will make the trial. In the hope of saving him; for the love of the light-hearted girl (you remember her) who was to have been married on a New Year's Day; and for the love of her Richard.' And she said he had come to her from Lilian, and Lilian had trusted to him, and she never could forget that. So they were married; and when they came home here, and I saw them, I hoped that such prophecies as parted them when they were young, may not often fulfil themselves as they did in this case, and I wouldn't be the makers of them for a Mine of Gold."

The gentleman got off the cask, and stretched himself, observing:

"I suppose he used her ill, as soon as they were married?"

"I don't think he ever did that," said Mrs. Tugby, shaking her head, and wiping her eyes. "He went on better for a short time; but, his habits were too old and strong to be got rid of; he soon fell back a little; and was falling fast back, when his illness came on strong upon him. I think he has always felt for her. I am sure he has. I have seen him, in his crying fits and tremblings, try to kiss her hand; and I have heard him call her 'Meg,' and say it was her nineteenth birthday. There he has been lying, now, these weeks and months. Between him and her baby, she has not

been able to do her old work; and by not being able to be regula she has lost it, even if she could have done it. How they ha lived, I hardly know!"

"*I* know," muttered Mr. Tugby; looking at the till, and rou the shop, and at his wife; and rolling his head with immen intelligence. "Like Fighting Cocks!"

He was interrupted by a cry—a sound of lamentation—fro the upper story of the house. The gentleman moved hurriedly the door.

"My friend," he said, looking back, "you needn't discu whether he shall be removed or not. He has spared you th trouble, I believe."

Saying so, he ran up stairs, followed by Mrs. Tugby; whi Mr. Tugby panted and grumbled after them at leisure: bei rendered more than commonly short-winded by the weight of t till, in which there had been an inconvenient quantity of copp Trotty, with the child beside him, floated up the staircase li mere air.

"Follow her! Follow her! Follow her!" He heard t ghostly voices in the Bells repeat their words as he ascende "Learn it, from the creature dearest to your heart!"

It was over. It was over. And this was she, her fathe pride and joy! This haggard, wretched woman, weeping by t bed, if it deserved that name, and pressing to her breast, a hanging down her head upon, an infant. Who can tell how spa how sickly, and how poor an infant? Who can tell how dear!

"Thank God!" cried Trotty, holding up his folded hand "Oh, God be thanked! She loves her child!"

The gentleman, not otherwise hard-hearted or indifferent such scenes, than that he saw them every day, and knew that th were figures of no moment in the Filer sums—mere scratches i the working of these calculations—laid his hand upon the hea that beat no more, and listened for the breath, and said, "His pa is over. It's better as it is!" Mrs. Tugby tried to comfort h with kindness. Mr. Tugby tried philosophy.

"Come, come!" he said, with his hands in his pockets, "y musta't give way, you know. That won't do. You must figh up. What would have become of me if *I* had given way whe was porter; and we had as many as six runaway carriage-doubl at our door in one night! But I fell back upon my strength mind, and didn't open it!"

Again Trotty heard the voices, saying, "Follow her!" H turned towards his guide, and saw it rising from him, passi through the air. "Follow her!" it said. And vanished.

He hovered round her; sat down at her feet; looked up into r face for one trace of her old self; listened for one note of her d pleasant voice. He flitted round the child: so wan, so pre-aturely old, so dreadful in its gravity, so plaintive in its feeble, ournful, miserable wail. He almost worshipped it. He clung it as her only safeguard; as the last unbroken link that bound r to endurance. He set his father's hope and trust on the frail aby; watched her every look upon it as she held it in her arms; d cried a thousand times, "She loves it! God be thanked, she ves it!"

He saw the woman tend her in the night; return to her when r grudging husband was asleep, and all was still; encourage her, ed tears with her, set nourishment before her. He saw the day me, and the night again; the day, the night; the time go by; e house of death relieved of death; the room left to herself and the child; he heard it moan and cry; he saw it harass her, d tire her out, and when she slumbered in exhaustion, drag her ck to consciousness, and hold her with its little hands upon the ck; but she was constant to it, gentle with it, patient with it. atient! Was its loving mother in her inmost heart and soul, d had its Being knitted up with hers as when she carried it born.

All this time, she was in want: languishing away, in dire and ning want. With the baby in her arms, she wandered here and ere, in quest of occupation; and with its thin face lying in her p, and looking up in hers, did any work for any wretched sum: day and night of labour for as many farthings as there were ures on the dial. If she had quarrelled with it; if she had glected it; if she had looked upon it with a moment's hate; if, the frenzy of an instant, she had struck it! No. His comfort as, She loved it always.

She told no one of her extremity, and wandered abroad in the y lest she should be questioned by her only friend: for any help e received from her hands, occasioned fresh disputes between the od woman and her husband; and it was new bitterness to be the ily cause of strife and discord, where she owed so much.

She loved it still. She loved it more and more. But a change ll on the aspect of her love. One night.

She was singing faintly to it in its sleep, and walking to and o to hush it, when her door was softly opened, and a man oked in.

"For the last time," he said.

"William Fern!"

"For the last time."

He listened like a man pursued: and spoke in whispers.

"Margaret, my race is nearly run. I couldn't finish i without a parting word with you. Without one grateful word."

"What have you done?" she asked: regarding him wit terror.

He looked at her, but gave no answer.

After a short silence, he made a gesture with his hand, as he set her question by; as if he brushed it aside; and said,

"It's long ago, Margaret, now: but that night is as fresh i my memory as ever 'twas. We little thought, then," he adde looking round, "that we should ever meet like this. Your chil Margaret? Let me have it in my arms. Let me hold yo child."

He put his hat upon the floor, and took it. And he tremble as he took it, from head to foot.

"Is it a girl?"

"Yes."

He put his hand before its little face.

"See how weak I'm grown, Margaret, when I want the courag to look at it! Let her be a moment. I won't hurt her. It long ago, but—What's her name?"

"Margaret," she answered, quickly.

"I'm glad of that," he said. "I'm glad of that."

He seemed to breathe more freely; and after pausing for a instant, took away his hand, and looked upon the infant's fac But covered it again, immediately.

"Margaret!" he said; and gave her back the child. "It Lilian's."

"Lilian's!"

"I held the same face in my arms when Lilian's mother die and left her."

"When Lilian's mother died and left her!" she repeated wildly.

"How shrill you speak! Why do you fix your eyes upon m so? Margaret!"

She sank down in a chair, and pressed the infant to her breas and wept over it. Sometimes, she released it from her embrace, t look anxiously in its face: then strained it to her bosom agai At those times: when she gazed upon it: then it was that some thing fierce and terrible began to mingle with her love. Then i was that her old father quailed.

"Follow her!" was sounded through the house. "Learn it from the creature dearest to your heart!"

"Margaret," said Fern, bending over her, and kissing her upo

ıe brow: "I thank you for the last time. Good night. Good-
ye. Put your hand in mine, and tell me you'll forget me from
is hour, and try to think the end of me was here."

"What have you done!" she asked again.

"There'll be a Fire to-night," he said, removing from her. There'll be Fires this winter-time, to light the dark nights, East, Vest, North, and South. When you see the distant sky red, ıey'll be blazing. When you see the distant sky red, think of ıe no more; or if you do, remember what a Hell was lighted up ıside of me, and think you see its flames reflected in the clouds. ood night. Good bye!"

She called to him; but he was gone. She sat down stupefied, ntil her infant roused her to a sense of hunger, cold, and dark-ess. She paced the room with it the livelong night, hushing it ıd soothing it. She said at intervals, "Like Lilian, when her ıother died and left her!" Why was her step so quick, her eye) wild, her love so fierce and terrible, whenever she repeated those ords?

"But it is Love," said Trotty. "It is Love. She'll never ease to love it. My poor Meg!"

She dressed the child next morning with unusual care—ah ain expenditure of care upon such squalid robes!—and once more ied to find some means of life. It was the last day of the Old ear. She tried till night, and never broke her fast. She tried ı vain.

She mingled with an abject crowd, who tarried in the snow, ntil it pleased some officer appointed to dispense the public harity (the lawful charity; not that once preached upon a Mount),) call them in, and question them, and say to this one, "Go to ıch a place," to that one, "Come next week;" to make a foot-all of another wretch, and pass him here and there, from hand to ınd, from house to house, until he wearied and lay down to die; r started up and robbed, and so became a higher sort of criminal, hose claims allowed of no delay. Here, too, she failed.

She loved her child, and wished to have it lying on her breast. ınd that was quite enough.

It was night: a bleak, dark, cutting night: when, pressing the ıild close to her for warmth, she arrived outside the house she alled her home. She was so faint and giddy, that she saw no one tanding in the doorway until she was close upon it, and about to ıter. Then she recognised the master of the house, who had so isposed himself—with his person it was not difficult—as to fill p the whole entry.

"Oh!" he said, softly. "You have come back?"

She looked at the child, and shook her head.

"Don't you think you have lived here long enough witho paying any rent? Don't you think that, without any mone you've been a pretty constant customer at this shop, now?" sa Mr. Tugby.

She repeated the same mute appeal.

"Suppose you try and deal somewhere else," he said. "A suppose you provide yourself with another lodging. Come! Do you think you could manage it?"

She said, in a low voice, that it was very late. To-morrow.

"Now I see what you want," said Tugby; "and what y mean. You know there are two parties in this house about yo and you delight in setting 'em by the ears. I don't want a quarrels; I'm speaking softly to avoid a quarrel; but if you do go away, I'll speak out loud, and you shall cause words hig enough to please you. But you shan't come in. That I a determined."

She put her hair back with her hand, and looked in a sudd manner at the sky, and the dark lowering distance.

"This is the last night of an Old Year: and I won't carry i blood and quarrellings and disturbances into a New One, to plea you nor anybody else," said Tugby, who was quite a retail Frie and Father. "I wonder you an't ashamed of yourself, to car such practices into a New Year. If you haven't any business i the world, but to be always giving way, and always making di turbances between man and wife, you'd be better out of it. G along with you."

"Follow her! To desperation!"

Again the old man heard the voices. Looking up, he saw t figures hovering in the air, and pointing where she went, down t dark street.

"She loves it!" he exclaimed, in agonised entreaty for he "Chimes! she loves it still!"

"Follow her!" The shadows swept upon the track she h taken, like a cloud.

He joined in the pursuit; he kept close to her; he looke into her face. He saw the same fierce and terrible expressio mingling with her love, and kindling in her eyes. He heard h say, "Like Lilian! To be changed like Lilian!" and her spe redoubled.

Oh, for something to awaken her. For any sight, or sound, scent, to call up tender recollections in a brain on fire! For a gentle image of the Past, to rise before her!

"I was her father! I was her father!" cried the old ma

tretching out his hands to the dark shadows flying on above. Have mercy on her, and on me! Where does she go? Turn er back! I was her father!"

But they only pointed to her, as she hurried on; and said, "To esperation! Learn it from the creature dearest to your heart!"

A hundred voices echoed it. The air was made of breath xpended in those words. He seemed to take them in, at every asp he drew. They were everywhere, and not to be escaped. nd still she hurried on; the same light in her eyes, the same ords in her mouth; "Like Lilian! To be changed like Lilian!"

All at once she stopped.

"Now, turn her back!" exclaimed the old man, tearing his hite hair. "My child! Meg! Turn her back! Great Father, rn her back!"

In her own scanty shawl, she wrapped the baby warm. With er fevered hands, she smoothed its limbs, composed its face, rranged its mean attire. In her wasted arms she folded it, as hough she never would resign it more. And with her dry lips, issed it in a final pang, and last long agony of Love.

Putting its tiny hand up to her neck, and holding it there, ithin her dress: next to her distracted heart: she set its eeping face against her: closely, steadily, against her: and sped ward to the River.

To the rolling River, swift and dim, where Winter Night sat rooding like the last dark thoughts of many who had sought a fuge there before her. Where scattered lights upon the banks leamed sullen, red, and dull, as torches that were burning there, show the way to Death. Where no abode of living people cast s shadow, on the deep, impenetrable, melancholy shade.

To the River! To that portal of Eternity, her desperate foot-eps tended with the swiftness of its rapid waters running to the ea. He tried to touch her as she passed him, going down to its ark level; but the wild distempered form, the fierce and terrible ve, the desperation that had left all human check or hold behind, vept by him like the wind.

He followed her. She paused a moment on the brink, before he dreadful plunge. He fell down on his knees, and in a shriek ddressed the figures in the Bells now hovering above them.

"I have learnt it!" cried the old man. "From the creature earest to my heart! Oh, save her, save her!"

He could wind his fingers in her dress; could hold it! As the ords escaped his lips, he felt his sense of touch return, and knew at he detained her.

The figures looked down steadfastly upon him.

"I have learnt it!" cried the old man. "Oh, have mercy
me in this hour, if, in my love for her, so young and good,
slandered Nature in the breasts of mothers rendered desperat
Pity my presumption, wickedness, and ignorance, and sa
her!"

He felt his hold relaxing. They were silent still.

"Have mercy on her!" he exclaimed, "as one in whom th
dreadful crime has sprung from Love perverted; from t
strongest, deepest Love we fallen creatures know! Think wh
her misery must have been, when such seed bears such frui
Heaven meant her to be good. There is no loving mother on t
earth who might not come to this, if such a life had gone befo
Oh, have mercy on my child, who, even at this pass, means me
to her own, and dies herself, and perils her Immortal Soul,
save it!"

She was in his arms. He held her now. His strength w
like a giant's.

"I see the Spirit of the Chimes among you!" cried the o
man, singling out the child, and speaking in some inspiratio
which their looks conveyed to him. "I know that our inheritan
is held in store for us by Time. I know there is a Sea of Time
rise one day, before which all who wrong us or oppress us will
swept away like leaves. I see it, on the flow! I know that
must trust and hope, and neither doubt ourselves, nor doubt t
Good in one another. I have learnt it from the creature dear
to my heart. I clasp her in my arms again. Oh Spirits, mercif
and good, I take your lesson to my breast along with her! O
Spirits, merciful and good, I am grateful!"

He might have said more, but the Bells; the old familiar Bel
his own dear, constant, steady friends, the Chimes; began to ri
the joy-peals for a New Year, so lustily, so merrily, so happil
so gaily, that he leapt upon his feet, and broke the spell th
bound him.

"And whatever you do, father," said Meg, "don't eat tri
again, without asking some doctor whether it's likely to agr
with you; for how you *have* been going on, Good gracious!"

She was working with her needle, at the little table by t
fire; dressing her simple gown with ribbons for her wedding.
quietly happy, so blooming and youthful, so full of beautif
promise, that he uttered a great cry as if it were an Angel in h
house; then flew to clasp her in his arms.

But he caught his feet in the newspaper, which had fallen
the hearth; and somebody came rushing in between them.

"No!" cried the voice of this same somebody; a generous and ly voice it was! "Not even you. Not even you. The first s of Meg in the New Year is mine. Mine! I have been iting outside the house, this hour, to hear the Bells and claim Meg, my precious prize, a happy year! A life of happy ars, my darling wife!"

And Richard smothered her with kisses.

You never in all your life saw anything like Trotty after this. don't care where you have lived or what you have seen; you ver in your life saw anything at all approaching him! He sat wn in his chair and beat his knees and cried; he sat down in chair and beat his knees and laughed; he sat down in his air and beat his knees and laughed and cried together; he got t of his chair and hugged Meg; he got out of his chair and gged Richard; he got out of his chair and hugged them both at ce; he kept running up to Meg, and squeezing her fresh face tween his hands and kissing it, going from her backwards not lose sight of it, and running up again like a figure in a magic ttern; and whatever he did, he was constantly sitting himself wn in this chair, and never stopping in it for one single moment; ng—that's the truth—beside himself with joy.

"And to-morrow's your wedding day, my pet!" cried Trotty. Your real, happy wedding-day!"

"To-day!" cried Richard, shaking hands with him. "To-day. e Chimes are ringing in the New Year. Hear them!"

They WERE ringing! Bless their sturdy hearts, they WERE ging! Great Bells as they were: melodious, deep-mouthed, ble Bells; cast in no common metal; made by no common nder; when had they ever chimed like that before!

"But to-day, my Pet," said Trotty. "You and Richard had ne words to-day."

"Because he's such a bad fellow, father," said Meg. "An't n, Richard? Such a headstrong, violent man! He'd have made more of speaking his mind to that great Alderman, and putting n down I don't know where, than he would of——"

"—Kissing Meg," suggested Richard. Doing it too!

"No. Not a bit more," said Meg. "But I wouldn't let him, her. Where would have been the use!"

"Richard my boy!" cried Trotty. "You was turned up Trumps ginally; and Trumps you must be, till you die! But you were ing by the fire to-night, my pet, when I came home! Why did cry by the fire?"

"I was thinking of the years we've passed together, father. ly that. And thinking you might miss me, and be lonely."

Trotty was backing off to that extraordinary chair again, whe the child, who had been awakened by the noise, came running i half-dressed.

"Why, here she is!" cried Trotty, catching her up. "Here little Lilian! Ha ha ha! Here we are and here we go! Oh he we are and here we go again! And here we are and here we go and Uncle Will too!" Stopping in his trot to greet him heartily "Oh, Uncle Will, the vision that I've had to-night, through lodgin you! Oh, Uncle Will, the obligations that you've laid me unde by your coming, my good friend!"

Before Will Fern could make the least reply, a band of mus burst into the room, attended by a lot of neighbours, screamin "A Happy New Year, Meg!" "A Happy Wedding!" "Man of 'em!" and other fragmentary good wishes of that sort. Th Drum (who was a private friend of Trotty's) then stepped forwar and said:

"Trotty Veck, my boy! It's got about, that your daughter going to be married to-morrow. There an't a soul that knows yo that don't wish you well, or that knows her and don't wish h well. Or that knows you both, and don't wish you both all th happiness the New Year can bring. And here we are, to play in and dance it in, accordingly."

Which was received with a general shout. The Drum w rather drunk, by the bye; but never mind.

"What a happiness it is, I'm sure," said Trotty, "to be esteemed! How kind and neighbourly you are! It's all along my dear daughter. She deserves it!"

They were ready for a dance in half a second (Meg and Richa at the top); and the Drum was on the very brink of leatherin away with all his power; when a combination of prodigious soun was heard outside, and a good-humoured comely woman of so fifty years of age, or thereabouts, came running in, attended by man bearing a stone pitcher of terrific size, and closely followed the marrow-bones and cleavers, and the bells; not *the* Bells, but portable collection, on a frame.

Trotty said, "It's Mrs. Chickenstalker!" And sat down, a beat his knees again.

"Married, and not tell me, Meg!" cried the good woma "Never! I couldn't rest on the last night of the Old Year witho coming to wish you joy. I couldn't have done it, Meg. Not if had been bedridden. So here I am; and as it's New Year's Ev and the Eve of your wedding too, my dear, I had a little flip mad and brought it with me."

Mrs. Chickenstalker's notion of a little flip, did honour to h

cter. The pitcher steamed and smoked and reeked like a no; and the man who had carried it, was faint.

Mrs. Tugby!" said Trotty, who had been going round and her, in an ecstasy. "I *should* say, Chickenstalker—Bless your heart and soul! A Happy New Year, and many of 'em! Mrs. Tugby," said Trotty when he had saluted her; "I *should* say, Chickenstalker — This is William Fern and Lilian."

he worthy dame, to his surprise, turned very pale and very

Not Lilian Fern whose mother died in Dorsetshire!" said she.

er uncle answered "Yes," and meeting hastily, they exchanged

some hurried words together; of which the upshot was, that Mr Chickenstalker shook him by both hands; saluted Trotty on h cheek again, of her own free will; and took the child to h capacious breast.

"Will Fern!" said Trotty, pulling on his right-hand muffle "Not the friend that you was hoping to find?"

"Ay!" returned Will, putting a hand on each of Trotty shoulders. "And like to prove a'most as good a friend, if that ca be, as one I found."

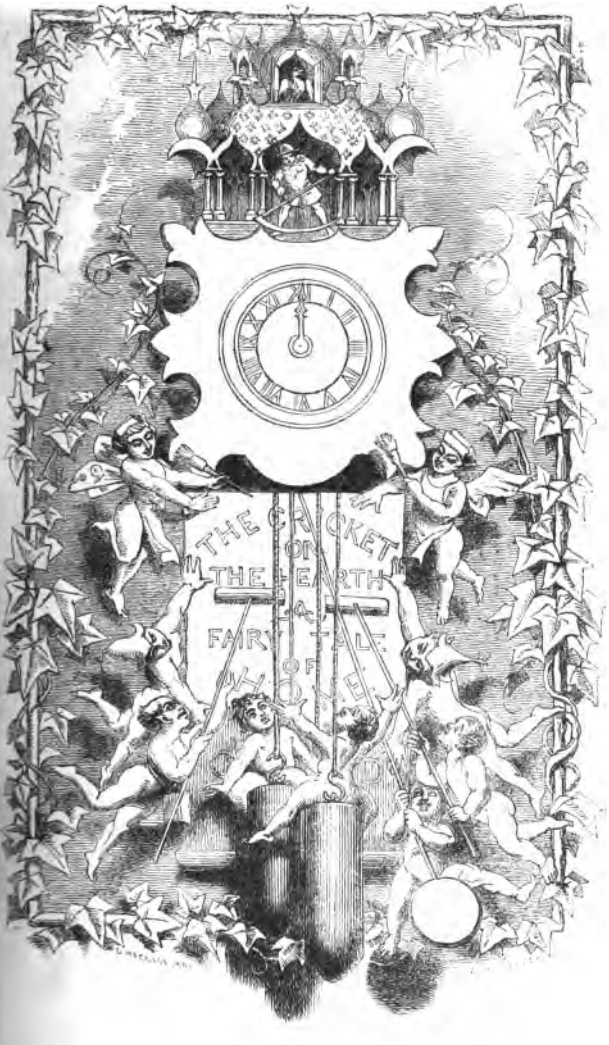
"Oh!" said Trotty. "Please to play up there. Will you hav the goodness!"

To the music of the band, the bells, the marrow-bones an cleavers, all at once; and while the Chimes were yet in lust operation out of doors; Trotty, making Meg and Richard secon couple, led off Mrs. Chickenstalker down the dance, and danced i in a step unknown before or since; founded on his own peculia trot.

Had Trotty dreamed? Or are his joys and sorrows, and th actors in them, but a dream; himself a dream; the teller of thi tale a dreamer, waking but now? If it be so, oh Listener, dear t him in all his visions, try to bear in mind the stern realities fro which these shadows come; and in your sphere—none is too wide and none too limited for such an end—endeavour to correct improve, and soften them. So may the New Year be a Happ one to You, Happy to many more whose Happiness depends o You! So may each Year be happier than the last, and not th meanest of our brethren or sisterhood debarred their rightful shar in what our Great Creator formed them to enjoy.

HE CRICKET ON THE HEARTH.

A Fairy Tale of Home.


THE CRICKET
ON THE HEARTH
A FAIRY TALE
OF HOME

ybingle may leave it on record to the end of time that she n't say which of them began it; but, I say the Kettle did. ght to know, I hope? The Kettle began it, full five minutes

by the little waxy-faced Dutch clock in the corner before th Cricket uttered a chirp.

As if the clock hadn't finished striking, and the convulsiv little Haymaker at the top of it, jerking away right and left wi a scythe in front of a Moorish Palace, hadn't mowed down half a acre of imaginary grass before the Cricket joined in at all!

Why, I am not naturally positive. Every one knows tha I wouldn't set my own opinion against the opinion of Mr Peerybingle, unless I were quite sure, on any account whateve Nothing should induce me. But this is a question of fact. An the fact is, that the Kettle began it, at least five minutes befo the Cricket gave any sign of being in existence. Contradict m and I'll say ten.

Let me narrate exactly how it happened. I should ha proceeded to do so, in my very first word, but for this pla consideration—if I am to tell a story I must begin at th beginning; and how is it possible to begin at the beginnin without beginning at the Kettle?

It appeared as if there were a sort of match, or trial of ski you must understand, between the Kettle and the Cricket. An this is what led to it, and how it came about.

Mrs. Peerybingle, going out into the raw twilight, and clickin over the wet stones in a pair of pattens that worked innumerab rough impressions of the first proposition in Euclid all about th yard—Mrs. Peerybingle filled the Kettle at the water-but Presently returning, less the pattens: and a good deal less, f they were tall and Mrs. Peerybingle was but short: she set th Kettle on the fire. In doing which she lost her temper, or misla it for an instant; for, the water—being uncomfortably cold, an in that slippy, slushy, sleety sort of state wherein it seems penetrate through every kind of substance, patten rings included- had laid hold of Mrs. Peerybingle's toes, and even splashed h legs. And when we rather plume ourselves (with reason to upon our legs, and keep ourselves particularly neat in point stockings, we find this, for the moment, hard to bear.

Besides, the Kettle was aggravating and obstinate. It wouldn allow itself to be adjusted on the top bar; it wouldn't hear accommodating itself kindly to the knobs of coal; it would lea forward with a drunken air, and dribble, a very Idiot of a Kettl on the hearth. It was quarrelsome; and hissed and spluttere morosely at the fire. To sum up all, the lid, resisting Mr Peerybingle's fingers, first of all turned topsy-turvy, and the with an ingenious pertinacity deserving of a better cause, dive sideways in—down to the very bottom of the Kettle. And th

ll of the Royal George has never made half the monstrous istance to coming out of the water, which the lid of that Kettle ployed against Mrs. Peerybingle, before she got it up again.

It looked sullen and pig-headed enough, even then; carrying handle with an air of defiance, and cocking its spout pertly and ckingly at Mrs. Peerybingle, as if it said, "I won't boil. thing shall induce me!"

But Mrs. Peerybingle, with restored good humour, dusted her bby little hands against each other, and sat down before the ttle: laughing. Meantime, the jolly blaze uprose and fell, shing and gleaming on the little Haymaker at the top of the tch clock, until one might have thought he stood stock still fore the Moorish Palace, and nothing was in motion but the me.

He was on the move, however; and had his spasms, two to e second, all right and regular. But his sufferings when the ck was going to strike, were frightful to behold; and when a ckoo looked out of a trap-door in the Palace, and gave note six nes, it shook him, each time, like a spectral voice—or like a mething wiry, plucking at his legs.

It was not until a violent commotion and a whirring noise ong the weights and ropes below him had quite subsided, that is terrified Haymaker became himself again. Nor was he rtled without reason; for these rattling, bony skeletons of cks are very disconcerting in their operation, and I wonder very ch how any set of men, but most of all how Dutchmen, can ve had a liking to invent them. For there is a popular belief t Dutchmen love broad cases and much clothing for their own ver selves; and they might know better than to leave their cks so very lank and unprotected, surely.

Now it was, you observe, that the Kettle began to spend the ming. Now it was, that the Kettle, growing mellow and sical, began to have irrepressible gurglings in its throat, and to lulge in short vocal snorts, which it checked in the bud, as if it dn't quite made up its mind yet, to be good company. Now it , that after two or three such vain attempts to stifle its vivial sentiments, it threw off all moroseness, all reserve, and t into a stream of song so cosy and hilarious, as never ndlin nightingale yet formed the least idea of.

So plain, too! Bless you, you might have understood it like a k—better than some books you and I could name, perhaps. th its warm breath gushing forth in a light cloud which rily and gracefully ascended a few feet, then hung about the mney-corner as its own domestic Heaven, it trolled its song

with that strong energy of cheerfulness, that its iron body humm and stirred upon the fire; and the lid itself, the recently rebellio lid—such is the influence of a bright example—performed a so of jig, and clattered like a deaf and dumb young cymbal that h never known the use of its twin brother.

That this song of the Kettle's was a song of invitation a welcome to somebody out of doors; to somebody at that mome coming on, towards the snug small home and the crisp fire; the is no doubt whatever. Mrs. Peerybingle knew it, perfectly, she sat musing, before the hearth. It's a dark night, sang t Kettle, and the rotten leaves are lying by the way; and abo all is mist and darkness, and below, all is mire and clay; a there's only one relief in all the sad and murky air; and I do know that it is one, for it's nothing but a glare, of deep a angry crimson, where the sun and wind together, set a bra upon the clouds for being guilty of such weather; and the wid open country is a long dull streak of black; and there's hoar-fr on the finger-post, and thaw upon the track; and the ice it is water, and the water isn't free; and you couldn't say th anything is what it ought to be; but he's coming, comi coming!——

And here, if you like, the Cricket DID chime in! with Chirrup, Chirrup, Chirrup of such magnitude, by way of chor with a voice, so astoundingly disproportionate to its size, compared with the Kettle; (size! you couldn't see it!) that if had then and there burst itself like an overcharged gun: if it h fallen a victim on the spot, and chirruped its little body i fifty pieces: it would have seemed a natural and inevita consequence, for which it had expressly laboured.

The Kettle had had the last of its solo performance. persevered with undiminished ardour; but the Cricket took fi fiddle and kept it. Good Heaven, how it chirped! Its shr sharp, piercing voice resounded through the house, and seemed twinkle in the outer darkness like a Star. There was an describable little trill and tremble in it, at its loudest, wh suggested its being carried off its legs, and made to leap aga by its own intense enthusiasm. Yet they went very well togeth the Cricket and the Kettle. The burden of the song was the same; and louder, louder, louder still, they sang it in th emulation.

The fair little listener—for fair she was, and young: thou something of what is called the dumpling shape; but I do myself object to that—lighted a candle; glanced at the H maker on the top of the clock, who was getting in a pre

erage crop of minutes; and looked out of the window, where e saw nothing, owing to the darkness, but her own face imaged f the glass. And my opinion is (and so would yours have been), at she might have looked a long way, and seen nothing half so greeable. When she came back, and sat down in her former at, the Cricket and the Kettle were still keeping it up, with a rfect fury of competition. The Kettle's weak side clearly being at he didn't know when he was beat.

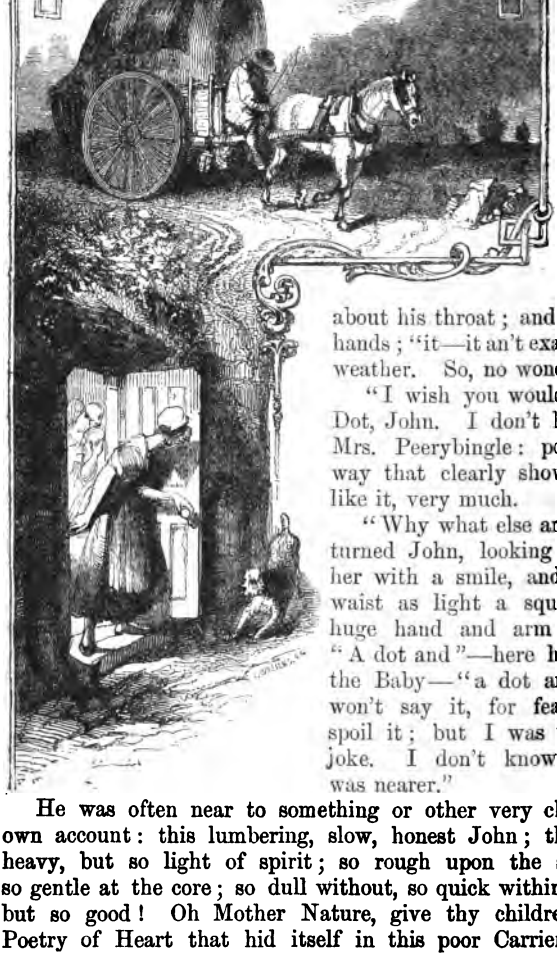
There was all the excitement of a race about it. Chirp, chirp, irp! Cricket a mile ahead. Hum, hum, hum—m—m! ettle making play in the distance, like a great top. Chirp, irp, chirp! Cricket round the corner. Hum, hum, hum—m -m! Kettle sticking to him in his own way; no idea of giving Chirp, chirp, chirp! Cricket fresher than ever. Hum, m, hum—m—m! Kettle slow and steady. Chirp, chirp, irp! Cricket going in to finish him. Hum, hum, hum— n—m! Kettle not to be finished. Until at last, they got so umbled together, in the hurry-skurry, helter-skelter, of the match, hat whether the Kettle chirped and the Cricket hummed, or the Cricket chirped and the Kettle hummed, or they both chirped and oth hummed, it would have taken a clearer head than yours or nine to have decided with anything like certainty. But of this, here is no doubt: that the Kettle and the Cricket, at one and the ame moment, and by some power of amalgamation best known to themselves, sent, each, his fireside song of comfort streaming into a ay of the candle that shone out through the window; and a long way down the lane. And this light, bursting on a certain person who, on the instant, approached towards it through the gloom, expressed the whole thing to him, literally in a twinkling, and ried, "Welcome home, old fellow! Welcome home, my Boy!"

This end attained, the Kettle, being dead beat, boiled over, nd was taken off the fire. Mrs. Peerybingle then went running o the door, where, what with the wheels of a cart, the tramp f a horse, the voice of a man, the tearing in and out of an xcited dog, and the surprising and mysterious appearance of a aby, there was soon the very What's-his-name to pay.

Where the Baby came from, or how Mrs. Peerybingle got old of it in that flash of time, *I* don't know. But a live Baby here was, in Mrs. Peerybingle's arms; and a pretty tolerable mount of pride she seemed to have in it, when she was drawn ently to the fire, by a sturdy figure of a man, much taller and uch older than herself; who had to stoop a long way down, to iss her. But she was worth the trouble. Six foot six, with ne lumbago, might have done it.

"Oh goodness, John!" said Mrs. P. "What a state yo
in with the weather!"

He was something the worse for it, undeniably. The t
mist hung in clots upon his eyelashes like candied thaw;
between
fog and
togeth
there
rainbow
his ve
whisker



"W
you s
Dot," J
made
swer, slo
as he
rolle
shawl f
about his throat; and warmed
hands; "it—it an't exactly sum
weather. So, no wonder."

"I wish you wouldn't call
Dot, John. I don't like it," r
Mrs. Peerybingle: pouting in
way that clearly showed she
like it, very much.

"Why what else are you?"
turned John, looking down u
her with a smile, and giving
waist as light a squeeze as
huge hand and arm could g
"A dot and"—here he glanced
the Baby—"a dot and carry
won't say it, for fear I sho
spoil it; but I was very nea
joke. I don't know as eve
was nearer."

He was often near to something or other very clever, by
own account: this lumbering, slow, honest John; this John
heavy, but so light of spirit; so rough upon the surface,
so gentle at the core; so dull without, so quick within; so stu
but so good! Oh Mother Nature, give thy children the t
Poetry of Heart that hid itself in this poor Carrier's breas

he was but a Carrier by the way—and we can bear to have them talking Prose, and leading lives of Prose; and bear to bless Thee for their company!

It was pleasant to see Dot, with her little figure and her Baby in her arms: a very doll of a Baby: glancing with a coquettish thoughtfulness at the fire, and inclining her delicate little head just enough on one side to let it rest in an odd, half-natural, half-affected, wholly nestling and agreeable manner, on the great rugged figure of the Carrier. It was pleasant to see him, with his tender awkwardness, endeavouring to adapt his rude support to her slight need, and make his burly middle-age a leaning-staff not inappropriate to her blooming youth. It was pleasant to observe how Tilly Slowboy, waiting in the background for the Baby, took special cognizance (though in her earliest teens) of this grouping; and stood with her mouth and eyes wide open, and her head thrust forward, taking it in as if it were air. Now was it less agreeable to observe how John the Carrier, reference being made by Dot to the aforesaid Baby, checked his hand when on the point of touching the infant, as if he thought he might crack it; and bending down, surveyed it from a safe distance, with a kind of puzzled pride: such as an amiable mastiff might be supposed to show, if he found himself, one day, the father of a young canary.

"An't he beautiful, John? Don't he look precious in his sleep?"

"Very precious," said John. "Very much so. He generally is asleep, an't he?"

"Lor John! Good gracious no!"

"Oh," said John, pondering. "I thought his eyes was generally shut. Halloa!"

"Goodness John, how you startle one!"

"It an't right for him to turn 'em up in that way!" said the astonished Carrier, "is it? See how he's winking with both of 'em at once! And look at his mouth! why he's gasping like a gold and silver fish!"

"You don't deserve to be a father, you don't," said Dot, with all the dignity of an experienced matron. "But how should you know what little complaints children are troubled with, John! You wouldn't so much as know their names, you stupid fellow." And when she had turned the Baby over on her left arm, and had slapped its back as a restorative, she pinched her husband's ear, laughing.

"No," said John, pulling off his outer coat. "It's very true, Dot. I don't know much about it. I only know that I've

been fighting pretty stiffly with the Wind to-night. It's b
blowing north-east, straight into the cart, the whole way home.

"Poor old man, so it has!" cried Mrs. Peerybingle, insta
becoming very active. "Here! Take the precious darl
Tilly, while I make myself of some use. Bless it, I could smot
it with kissing it, I could! Hie then, good dog! Hie Bo
boy! Only let me make the tea first, John; and then I'll
you with the parcels, like a busy bee. 'How doth the lit
—and all the rest of it, you know, John. Did you ever le
'how doth the little,' when you went to school, John?"

"Not to quite know it," John returned. "I was very
it once. But I should only have spoilt it, I dare say."

"Ha ha!" laughed Dot. She had the blithest little la
you ever heard. "What a dear old darling of a dunce you
John, to be sure!"

Not at all disputing this position, John went out to
that the boy with the lantern, which had been dancing to
fro before the door and window, like a Will of the Wisp,
due care of the horse; who was fatter than you would q
believe, if I gave you his measure, and so old that his birth
was lost in the mists of antiquity. Boxer, feeling that
attentions were due to the family in general, and must
impartially distributed, dashed in and out with bewilde
inconstancy; now describing a circle of short barks round
horse, where he was being rubbed down at the stable-door;
feigning to make savage rushes at his mistress, and facetio
bringing himself to sudden stops; now eliciting a shriek
Tilly Slowboy, in the low nursing-chair near the fire, by
unexpected application of his moist nose to her countena
now exhibiting an obtrusive interest in the Baby; now g
round and round upon the hearth, and lying down as if he
established himself for the night; now getting up again,
taking that nothing of a fag-end of a tail of his, out into
weather, as if he had just remembered an appointment, and
off, at a round trot, to keep it.

"There! There's the teapot, ready on the hob!" said
as briskly busy as a child at play at keeping house. "
there's the cold knuckle of ham; and there's the butter;
there's the crusty loaf, and all! Here's the clothes-basket
the small parcels, John, if you've got any there—where are
John? Don't let the dear child fall under the grate, T
whatever you do!"

It may be noted of Miss Slowboy, in spite of her rejecting
caution with some vivacity, that she had a rare and surpri

for getting this Baby into difficulties: and had several times illed its short life, in a quiet way peculiarly her own. She was of a spare and straight shape, this young lady, insomuch that her garments appeared to be in constant danger of sliding off those sharp pegs, her shoulders, on which they were loosely hung. Her costume was remarkable for the partial development, on all possible occasions, of some flannel vestment of a singular structure; also for affording glimpses, in the region of the back, of a corset, or pair of stays, in colour a dead-green. Being always in a state of gaping admiration at everything, and absorbed, besides, in the perpetual contemplation of her mistress's perfections and the Baby's, Miss Slowboy, in her little errors of judgment,

be said to have done equal honour to her head and to eart; and though these did less honour to the Baby's head, they were the occasional means of bringing into contact deal doors, dressers, stair-rails, bedposts, and other foreign

John nodded.

Mrs. Peerybingle nodded also, fifty times at least. No assent—in dumb and pitying amazement; screwing up her lips while, with all their little force (they were never made for screwing up; I am clear of that), and looking the good Carrier through through, in her abstraction. Miss Slowboy, in the mean t who had a mechanical power of reproducing scraps of cu conversation for the delectation of the Baby, with all the s struck out of them, and all the nouns changed into the p number, inquired aloud of that young creature, Was it Gruffs Tackletons the toymakers then, and Would it call at Pastry-c for wedding-cakes, and Did its mothers know the boxes whe fathers brought them homes; and so on.

"And that is really to come about!" said Dot. "Why and I were girls at school together, John."

He might have been thinking of her: or nearly thinking of perhaps: as she was in that same school time. He looked her with a thoughtful pleasure, but he made no answer.

"And he's as old! As unlike her!—Why, how many y older than you, is Gruff and Tackleton, John?"

"How many more cups of tea shall I drink to-night at sitting, than Gruff and Tackleton ever took in four, I wond replied John, good-humouredly, as he drew a chair to the r table, and began at the cold ham. "As to eating, I eat little; but that little I enjoy, Dot."

Even this; his usual sentiment at meal times, one of innocent delusions (for his appetite was always obstinate, and f contradicted him); awoke no smile in the face of his little who stood among the parcels, pushing the cake-box slowly her with her foot, and never once looked, though her eyes cast down too, upon the dainty shoe she generally was so min of. Absorbed in thought, she stood there, heedless alike of the and John (although he called to her, and rapped the table with knife to startle her), until he rose and touched her on the a when she looked at him for a moment, and hurried to her p behind the teaboard, laughing at her negligence. But not as had laughed before. The manner and the music were q changed.

The Cricket, too, had stopped. Somehow the room was no cheerful as it had been. Nothing like it.

"So these are all the parcels, are they, John?" she s breaking a long silence, which the honest Carrier had devote the practical illustration of one part of his favourite sentimen certainly enjoying what he ate, if it couldn't be admitted

he ate but little. "So these are all the parcels; are they, John?"

"That's all," said John. "Why—no—I—" laying down his knife and fork, and taking a long breath. "I declare—I've clean forgotten the old gentleman!"

"The old gentleman?"

"In the cart," said John. "He was asleep, among the straw, the last time I saw him. I've very nearly remembered him, twice, since I came in; but he went. out of my head again. Holloa! Yahip there! Rouse up! That's my hearty?"

John said these latter words outside the door, whither he had hurried with the candle in his hand.

Miss Slowboy, conscious of some mysterious reference to The Old Gentleman, and connecting in her mystified imagination certain associations of a religious nature with the phrase, was so disturbed, that hastily rising from the low chair by the fire to seek protection near the skirts of her mistress, and coming into contact as she crossed the doorway with an ancient Stranger, she instinctively made a charge or butt at him with the only offensive instrument within her reach. This instrument happening to be the Baby, great commotion and alarm ensued, which the sagacity of Boxer rather tended to increase; for that good dog, more thoughtful than its master, had, it seemed, been watching the old gentleman in his sleep lest he should walk off with a few young poplar trees that were tied up behind the cart; and he still attended on him very closely; worrying his gaiters in fact, and making dead sets at the buttons.

"You're such an undeniable good sleeper, Sir," said John, when tranquillity was restored; in the mean time the old gentleman had stood, bareheaded and motionless, in the centre of the room; "that I have half a mind to ask you where the other six are: only that would be a joke, and I know I should spoil it. Very near though," murmured the Carrier, with a chuckle; "very near!"

The Stranger, who had long white hair; good features, singularly bold and well defined for an old man; and dark, bright, penetrating eyes; looked round with a smile, and saluted the Carrier's wife by gravely inclining his head.

His garb was very quaint and odd—a long, long way behind the time. Its hue was brown, all over. In his hand he held a great brown club or walking-stick; and striking this upon the floor, it fell asunder, and became a chair. On which he sat down, quite composedly.

"There!" said the Carrier, turning to his wife. "That's the way I found him, sitting by the roadside! Upright as a milestone. And almost as deaf."

"Sitting in the open air, John!"

"In the open air," replied the Carrier, "just at dusk 'Carriage Paid,' he said; and gave me eighteenpence. Then h got in. And there he is."

"He's going, John, I think!"

Not at all. He was only going to speak.

"If you please, I was to be left till called for," said the Stranger mildly. "Don't mind me."

With that, he took a pair of spectacles from one of his larg pockets, and a book from another, and leisurely began to rea Making no more of Boxer than if he had been a house lamb!

The Carrier and his wife exchanged a look of perplexity. Th Stranger raised his head; and glancing from the latter to th former, said:

"Your daughter, my good friend?"

"Wife," returned John.

"Niece?" said the Stranger.

"Wife," roared John.

"Indeed?" observed the Stranger. "Surely? Very young!

He quietly turned over, and resumed his reading. But before he could have read two lines, he again interrupted himsel to say:

"Baby, yours?"

John gave him a gigantic nod; equivalent to an answer in th affirmative, delivered through a speaking-trumpet.

"Girl?"

"Bo-o-oy!" roared John.

"Also very young, eh?"

Mrs. Peerybingle instantly struck in. "Two months and thre da-ays! Vaccinated just six weeks ago-o! Took very fine-ly Considered, by the doctor, a remarkably beautiful chi-ild! Equa to the general run of children at five months o-old! Takes notice in a way quite won-der-ful! May seem impossible to you, but feel his legs al-ready!"

Here the breathless little mother, who had been shrieking thes short sentences into the old man's ear, until her pretty face wa crimsoned, held up the Baby before him as a stubborn an triumphant fact; while Tilly Slowboy, with a melodious cry o "Ketcher, Ketcher"—which sounded like some unknown word adapted to a popular Sneeze—performed some cow-like gambol round that all-unconscious Innocent.

"Hark! He's called for, sure enough," said John. "There somebody at the door. Open it, Tilly."

Before she could reach it, however, it was opened from without

being a primitive sort of door, with a latch, that any one could lift if he chose—and a good many people did choose, I can tell you; for all kinds of neighbours liked to have a cheerful word or two with the Carrier, though he was no great talker himself. Being opened, it gave admission to a little, meagre, thoughtful, dingy-faced man, who seemed to have made himself a great-coat from the sack-cloth covering of some old box; for when he turned to shut the door, and keep the weather out, he disclosed upon the back of that garment, the inscription G & T in large black capitals. Also the word GLASS in bold characters.

"Good evening John!" said the little man. "Good evening Mum. Good evening Tilly. Good evening Unbeknown! How's Baby Mum? Boxer's pretty well I hope?"

"All thriving, Caleb," replied Dot. "I am sure you need only look at the dear child, for one, to know that."

"And I'm sure I need only look at you for another," said Caleb.

He didn't look at her though; he had a wandering and thoughtful eye which seemed to be always projecting itself into some other time and place, no matter what he said; a description which will equally apply to his voice.

"Or at John for another," said Caleb. "Or at Tilly, as far as that goes. Or certainly at Boxer."

"Busy just now, Caleb?" asked the Carrier.

"Why, pretty well, John," he returned, with the distraught air of a man who was casting about for the Philosopher's stone, at least. "Pretty much so. There's rather a run on Noah's Arks at present. I could have wished to improve upon the Family, but I don't see how it's to be done at the price. It would be a satisfaction to one's mind, to make it clearer which was Shems and Hams, and which was Wives. Flies an't on that scale neither, as compared with elephants you know! Ah! well! Have you got anything in the parcel line for me, John?"

The Carrier put his hand into a pocket of the coat he had taken off; and brought out, carefully preserved in moss and paper, a tiny flower-pot.

"There it is!" he said, adjusting it with great care. "Not so much as a leaf damaged. Full of buds!"

Caleb's dull eye brightened, as he took it, and thanked him.

"Dear, Caleb," said the Carrier. "Very dear at this season."

"Never mind that. It would be cheap to me, whatever it cost," returned the little man. "Anything else, John?"

"A small box," replied the Carrier. "Here you are!"

"'For Caleb Plummer,'" said the little man, spelling out the

direction. "'With Cash.' With Cash, John. I don't think it for me."

"With Care," returned the Carrier, looking over his shoulde "Where do you make out cash?"

"Oh! To be sure!" said Caleb. "It's all right. With car Yes, yes; that's mine. It might have been with cash, indeed, my dear Boy in the Golden South Americas had lived, Joh You loved him like a son; didn't you? You needn't say you di *I* know, of course. 'Caleb Plummer. With care.' Yes, yes, it all right. It's a box of dolls' eyes for my daughter's work. wish it was her own sight in a box, John."

"I wish it was, or could be!" cried the Carrier.

"Thank'ee," said the little man. "You speak very heart To think that she should never see the Dolls—and them a-stari at her, so bold, all day long! That's where it cuts. What's t damage, John?"

"I'll damage you," said John, "if you inquire. Dot! Ve near?"

"Well! it's like you to say so," observed the little man. "I your kind way. Let me see. I think that's all."

"I think not," said the Carrier. "Try again."

"Something for our Governor, eh?" said Caleb, after ponde ing a little while. "To be sure. That's what I came for; b my head's so running on them Arks and things! He hasn't be here, has he?"

"Not he," returned the Carrier. "He's too busy, courting."

"He's coming round though," said Caleb; "for he told me keep on the near side of the road going home, and it was ten one he'd take me up. I had better go, by the bye.—You couldn have the goodness to let me pinch Boxer's tail, Mum, for half moment, could you?"

"Why, Caleb! what a question!"

"Oh never mind, Mum," said the little man. "He might like it perhaps. There's a small order just come in, for barki dogs; and I should wish to go as close to Natur' as I could, f sixpence. That's all. Never mind Mum."

It happened opportunely, that Boxer, without receiving t proposed stimulus, began to bark with great zeal. But as th implied the approach of some new visitor, Caleb, postponing h study from the life to a more convenient season, shouldered t round box, and took a hurried leave. He might have spar himself the trouble, for he met the visitor upon the threshold.

"Oh! You are here, are you? Wait a bit. I'll take y home. John Peerybingle, my service to you. More of my servi

to your pretty wife. Handsomer every day! Better too, if possible! And younger," mused the speaker, in a low voice; "that's the Devil of it!"

"I should be astonished at your paying compliments, Mr. Tackleton," said Dot, not with the best grace in the world; "but for your condition."

"You know all about it then?"

"I have got myself to believe it, somehow," said Dot.

"After a hard struggle, I suppose?"

"Very."

Tackleton the Toy-merchant, pretty generally known as Gruff and Tackleton—for that was the firm, though Gruff had been bought out long ago; only leaving his name, and as some said his nature, according to its Dictionary meaning, in the business—Tackleton the Toy-merchant, was a man whose vocation had been quite misunderstood by his Parents and Guardians. If they had made him a Money Lender, or a sharp Attorney, or a Sheriff's Officer, or a Broker, he might have sown his discontented oats in his youth, and, after having had the full run of himself in ill-natured transactions, might have turned out amiable, at last, for the sake of a little freshness and novelty. But, cramped and chafing in the peaceable pursuit of toy-making, he was a domestic Ogre, who had been living on children all his life, and was their implacable enemy. He despised all toys; wouldn't have bought one for the world; delighted, in his malice, to insinuate grim expressions into the faces of brown-paper farmers who drove pigs to market, bellmen who advertised lost lawyers' consciences, moveable old ladies who darned stockings or carved pies; and other like samples of his stock in trade. In appalling masks; hideous, hairy, red-eyed Jacks in Boxes; Vampire Kites; demoniacal Tumblers who wouldn't lie down, and were perpetually flying forward, to stare infants out of countenance; his soul perfectly revelled. They were his only relief, and safety-valve. He was great in such inventions. Anything suggestive of a Pony-nightmare, was delicious to him. He had even lost money (and he took to that toy very kindly) by getting up Goblin slides for magic-lanterns, whereon the Powers of Darkness were depicted as a sort of supernatural shell-fish, with human faces. In intensifying the portraiture of Giants, he had sunk quite a little capital; and, though no painter himself, he could indicate, for the instruction of his artists, with a piece of chalk, a certain furtive leer for the countenances of those monsters, which was safe to destroy the peace of mind of any young gentleman between the ages of six and eleven, for the whole Christmas or Midsummer Vacation.

What he was in toys, he was (as most men are) in all oth things. You may easily suppose, therefore, that within the gre cape, which reached down to the calves of his legs, there wa buttoned up to the chin an uncommonly pleasant fellow; and th he was about as choice a spirit, and as agreeable a companion, a ever stood in a pair of bull-headed looking boots with mahogan coloured tops.

Still, Tackleton, the Toy-merchant, was going to be marrie In spite of all this, he was going to be married. And to a youn wife too; a beautiful young wife.

He didn't look much like a bridegroom, as he stood in th Carrier's kitchen, with a twist in his dry face, and a screw in hi body, and his hat jerked over the bridge of his nose, and his hand tucked down into the bottoms of his pockets, and his whol sarcastic ill-conditioned self peering out of one little corner of on little eye, like the concentrated essence of any number of raven But, a Bridegroom he designed to be.

"In three days' time. Next Thursday. The last day of th first month in the year. That's my wedding-day," said Tackleto

Did I mention that he had always one eye wide open, and on eye nearly shut; and that the one eye nearly shut, was alway the expressive eye? I don't think I did.

"That's my wedding-day!" said Tackleton, rattling his money

"Why, it's our wedding-day too," exclaimed the Carrier.

"Ha ha!" laughed Tackleton. "Odd! You're just suc another couple. Just!"

The indignation of Dot at this presumptuous assertion is not t be described. What next? His imagination would compass th possibility of just such another Baby, perhaps. The man was mad

"I say! A word with you," murmured Tackleton, nudgin the Carrier with his elbow, and taking him a little apart. "You come to the wedding? We're in the same boat, you know."

"How in the same boat?" inquired the Carrier.

"A little disparity, you know;" said Tackleton, with anothe nudge. "Come and spend an evening with us, beforehand."

"Why?" demanded John, astonished at this pressing hospitality

"Why?" returned the other. "That's a new way of receivin an invitation. Why, for pleasure; sociability, you know, and a that!"

"I thought you were never sociable," said John, in his plai way.

"Tchah! It's of no use to be anything but free with you see," said Tackleton. "Why, then, the truth is you have a— what tea-drinking people call a sort of a comfortable appearanc

together: you and your wife. We know better, you know, but——"

"No, we don't know better," interposed John. "What are you talking about?"

"Well! We *don't* know better, then," said Tackleton. "We'll agree that we don't. As you like; what does it matter? I was going to say, as you have that sort of appearance, your company will produce a favourable effect on Mrs. Tackleton that will be. And, though I don't think your good lady's very friendly to me, in this matter, still she can't help herself from falling into my views, for there's a compactness and cosiness of appearance about her that always tells, even in an indifferent case. You'll say you'll come?"

"We have arranged to keep our Wedding-Day (as far as that goes) at home," said John. "We have made the promise to ourselves these six months. We think, you see, that home——"

"Bah! what's home?" cried Tackleton. "Four walls and a ceiling! (why don't you kill that Cricket; *I* would! I always do. I hate their noise.) There are four walls and a ceiling at my house. Come to me!"

"You kill your Crickets, eh?" said John.

"Scrunch 'em, Sir," returned the other, setting his heel heavily on the floor. "You'll say you'll come? It's as much your interest as mine, you know, that the women should persuade each other that they're quiet and contented, and couldn't be better off. I know their way. Whatever one woman says, another woman is determined to clinch, always. There's that spirit of emulation among 'em, Sir, that if your wife says to my wife, 'I'm the happiest woman in the world, and mine's the best husband in the world, and I dote on him,' my wife will say the same to yours, or more, and half believe it."

"Do you mean to say she don't, then?" asked the Carrier.

"Don't!" cried Tackleton, with a short, sharp laugh. "Don't what?"

The Carrier had had some faint idea of adding, "dote upon you." But happening to meet the half-closed eye, as it twinkled upon him over the turned-up collar of the cape, which was within an ace of poking it out, he felt it such an unlikely part and parcel of anything to be doted on, that he substituted, "that she don't believe it?"

"Ah you dog! You're joking," said Tackleton.

But the Carrier, though slow to understand the full drift of his meaning, eyed him in such a serious manner, that he was obliged to be a little more explanatory.

"I have the humour," said Tackleton: holding up the finge of his left hand, and tapping the forefinger, to imply 'there I a Tackleton to wit:' "I have the humour, Sir, to marry a you wife and a pretty wife:" here he rapped his little finger, to expre the Bride; not sparingly, but sharply; with a sense of pow "I'm able to gratify that humour and I do. It's my whim. B —now look there."

He pointed to where Dot was sitting, thoughtfully, before t fire; leaning her dimpled chin upon her hand, and watching t bright blaze. The Carrier looked at her, and then at him, a then at her, and then at him again.

"She honours and obeys, no doubt, you know," said Tackleto "and that, as I am not a man of sentiment, is quite enough f *me*. But do you think there's anything more in it?"

"I think," observed the Carrier, "that I should chuck a man out of window, who said there wasn't."

"Exactly so," returned the other with an unusual alacrity assent. "To be sure! Doubtless you would. Of course. I certain of it. Good night. Pleasant dreams!"

The good Carrier was puzzled, and made uncomfortable a uncertain, in spite of himself. He couldn't help showing it, in h manner.

"Good night, my dear friend!" said Tackleton, compassionate "I'm off. We're exactly alike, in reality, I see. You won't gi us to-morrow evening? Well! Next day you go out visiting, know. I'll meet you there, and bring my wife that is to be. It do her good. You're agreeable? Thank'ee. What's that!"

It was a loud cry from the Carrier's wife; a loud, sharp, sudd cry, that made the room ring, like a glass vessel. She had ri from her seat, and stood like one transfixed by terror and surpri The Stranger had advanced towards the fire to warm himself, a stood within a short stride of her chair. But quite still.

"Dot!" cried the Carrier. "Mary! Darling! What's t matter?"

They were all about her in a moment. Caleb, who had be dozing on the cake-box, in the first imperfect recovery of h suspended presence of mind seized Miss Slowboy by the hair of h head, but immediately apologised.

"Mary!" exclaimed the Carrier, supporting her in his arm "Are you ill! What is it? Tell me dear!"

She only answered by beating her hands together, and falli into a wild fit of laughter. Then, sinking from his grasp up the ground, she covered her face with her apron, and wept bitter And then she laughed again, and then she cried again; and the

she said how cold it was, and suffered him to lead her to the fire, where she sat down as before. The old man standing, as before; quite still.

"I'm better, John," she said. "I'm quite well now—I——"

"John!" But John was on the other side of her. Why turn her face towards the strange old gentleman, as if addressing him! Was her brain wandering?

"Only a fancy, John dear—a kind of shock—a something coming suddenly before my eyes—I don't know what it was. It's quite gone; quite gone."

"I'm glad it's gone," muttered Tackleton, turning the expressive eye all round the room. "I wonder where it's gone, and what it was. Humph! Caleb, come here! Who's that with the grey hair?"

"I don't know Sir," returned Caleb in a whisper. "Never see him before, in all my life. A beautiful figure for a nut-cracker; quite a new model. With a screw-jaw opening down into his waistcoat, he'd be lovely."

"Not ugly enough," said Tackleton.

"Or for a firebox, either," observed Caleb, in deep contemplation, "what a model! Unscrew his head to put the matches in; turn him heels up'ards for the light; and what a firebox for a gentleman's mantel-shelf, just as he stands!"

"Not half ugly enough," said Tackleton. "Nothing in him at all. Come! Bring that box! All right now, I hope?"

"Oh quite gone! Quite gone!" said the little woman, waving him hurriedly away. "Good night!"

"Good night," said Tackleton. "Good night, John Peerybingle! Take care how you carry that box, Caleb. Let it fall, and I'll murder you! Dark as pitch, and weather worse than ever, eh? Good night!"

So, with another sharp look round the room, he went out at the door; followed by Caleb with the wedding-cake on his head.

The Carrier had been so much astounded by his little wife, and so busily engaged in soothing and tending her, that he had scarcely been conscious of the Stranger's presence, until now, when he again stood there, their only guest.

"He don't belong to them, you see," said John. "I must give him a hint to go."

"I beg your pardon, friend," said the old gentleman, advancing to him; "the more so, as I fear your wife has not been well; but the Attendant whom my infirmity," he touched his ears and shook his head, "renders almost indispensable, not having arrived, I fear there must be some mistake. The bad night which made the

shelter of your comfortable cart (may I never have a worse!) acceptable, is still as bad as ever. Would you, in your kindn suffer me to rent a bed here?"

"Yes, yes," cried Dot. "Yes! Certainly!"

"Oh!" said the Carrier, surprised by the rapidity of t consent. "Well! I don't object; but still I'm not quite s that——"

"Hush!" she interrupted. "Dear John!"

"Why, he's stone deaf," urged John.

"I know he is, but—Yes Sir, certainly. Yes! certain I'll make him up a bed, directly, John."

As she hurried off to do it, the flutter of her spirits, and agitation of her manner, were so strange, that the Carrier st looking after her, quite confounded.

"Did its mothers make it up a Beds then!" cried Miss Sl boy to the Baby; "and did its hair grow brown and curly, w its caps was lifted off, and frighten it, a precious Pets, a sitting the fires!"

With that unaccountable attraction of the mind to trifles, wh is often incidental to a state of doubt and confusion, the Carr as he walked slowly to and fro, found himself mentally repeat even these absurd words, many times. So many times that got them by heart, and was still conning them over and over, l a lesson, when Tilly, after administering as much friction to little bald head with her hand as she thought wholesome (acco ing to the practice of nurses), had once more tied the Baby's cap

"And frighten it a precious Pets, a sitting by the fire. W frightened Dot, I wonder!" mused the Carrier, pacing to and

He scouted, from his heart, the insinuations of the Toy-merch and yet they filled him with a vague, indefinite uneasiness; Tackleton was quick and sly; and he had that painful set himself, of being a man of slow perception, that a broken hint always worrying to him. He certainly had no intention in mind of linking anything that Tackleton had said, with unusual conduct of his wife; but the two subjects of reflect came into his mind together, and he could not keep them asund

The bed was soon made ready; and the visitor, declining refreshment but a cup of tea, retired. Then Dot: quite w again, she said: quite well again: arranged the great chair in chimney-corner for her husband; filled his pipe and gave it hi and took her usual little stool beside him on the hearth.

She always *would* sit on that little stool; I think she m have had a kind of notion that it was a coaxing, wheedling, lit stool.

e was, out and out, the very best filler of a pipe, I should
n the four quarters of the globe. To see her put that chubby
finger in the bowl, and then blow down the pipe to clear the
and, when she had done so, affect to think that there was
something in the tube, and blow a dozen times, and hold it
r eye like a telescope, with a most provoking twist in her
l little face, as she looked down it; was quite a brilliant thing. As to the tobacco, she was perfect mistress of the subject; and her lighting of the pipe, with a wisp of paper, when the Carrier had it in his mouth—going so very near his nose, and yet not scorching it—was Art: high Art, Sir.

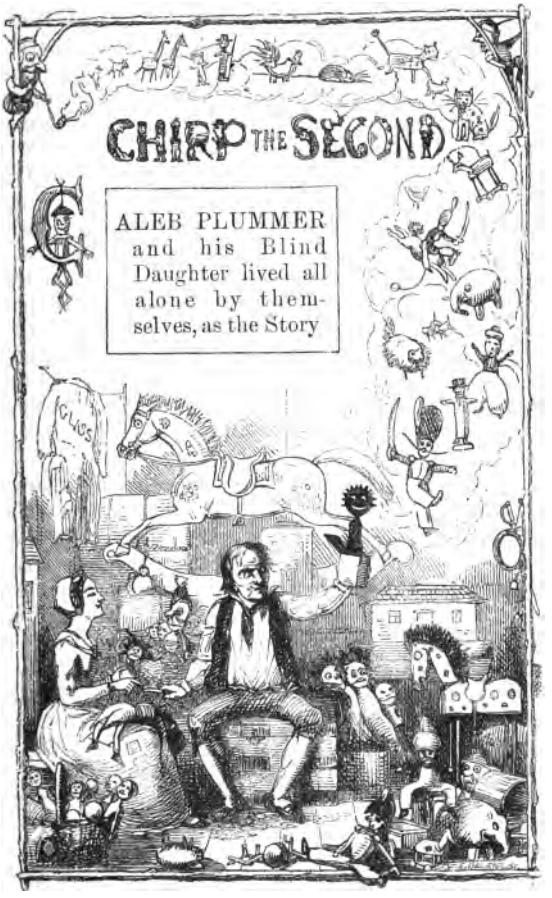
And the Cricket and the Kettle, turning up again, acknowledged it! The bright fire, blazing up again, acknowledged it! The little Mower on the clock, in his unheeded work, acknowl it! The Carrier, in his smoothing forehead and expanding acknowledged it, the readiest of all.

d as he soberly and thoughtfully puffed at his old pipe; and Dutch clock ticked; and as the red fire gleamed; and as ricket chirped; that Genius of his Hearth and Home (for he Cricket was) came out, in fairy shape, into the room, and oned many forms of Home about him. Dots of all ages,

and all sizes, filled the chamber. Dots who were merry child running on before him, gathering flowers, in the fields; coy D half shrinking from, half yielding to, the pleading of his own ro image; newly-married Dots, alighting at the door, and tal wondering possession of the household keys; motherly little D attended by fictitious Slowboys, bearing babies to be christe matronly Dots, still young and blooming, watching Dots daughters, as they danced at rustic balls; fat Dots, encircled beset by troops of rosy grand-children; withered Dots, who lea on sticks, and tottered as they crept along. Old Carriers appeared, with blind old Boxers lying at their feet; and ne carts with younger drivers ("Peerybingle Brothers" on the ti and sick old Carriers, tended by the gentlest hands; and grave dead and gone old Carriers, green in the churchyard. And as Cricket showed him all these things—he saw them plainly, tho his eyes were fixed upon the fire—the Carrier's heart grew l and happy, and he thanked his Household Gods with all his mi and cared no more for Gruff and Tackleton than you do.

But what was that young figure of a man, which the s Fairy Cricket set so near Her stool, and which remained th singly and alone? Why did it linger still, so near her, with arm upon the chimney-piece, ever repeating "Married! and no me!"

Oh Dot! Oh failing Dot! There is no place for it in all husband's visions; why has its shadow fallen on his hearth!



say—and my blessing, with yours to back it I hope, on the -books, for saying anything in this workaday world !—Caleb mer and his Blind Daughter lived all alone by themselves, ittle cracked nutshell of a wooden house, which was, in truth, tter than a pimple on the prominent red-brick nose of Gruff 'ackleton. The premises of Gruff and Tackleton were the feature of the street; but you might have knocked down

Caleb Plummer's dwelling with a hammer or two, and carrie
the pieces in a cart.

If any one had done the dwelling-house of Caleb Plumme
honour to miss it after such an inroad, it would have bee
doubt, to commend its demolition as a vast improvement.
stuck to the premises of Gruff and Tackleton, like a barnacle
ship's keel, or a snail to a door, or a little bunch of toadstoo
the stem of a tree. But it was the germ from which the
grown trunk of Gruff and Tackleton had sprung; and unde
crazy roof, the Gruff before last had, in a small way, made
for a generation of old boys and girls, who had played with t
and found them out, and broken them, and gone to sleep.

I have said that Caleb and his poor Blind Daughter lived
I should have said that Caleb lived here, and his poor
Daughter somewhere else; in an enchanted home of C
furnishing, where scarcity and shabbiness were not, and tr
never entered. Caleb was no sorcerer, but in the only magi
that still remains to us: the magic of devoted, deathless
Nature had been the mistress of his study; and from her teac
all the wonder came.

The Blind Girl never knew that ceilings were discoloured;
blotched and bare of plaster here and there; high crevice
stopped and widening every day; beams mouldering and te
downward. The Blind Girl never knew that iron was ru
wood rotting, paper peeling off; the very size, and shape, and
proportion of the dwelling, withering away. The Blind Girl
knew that ugly shapes of delf and earthenware were on the b
that sorrow and faintheartedness were in the house; that C
scanty hairs were turning greyer and more grey, before her
less face. The Blind Girl never knew they had a master,
exacting, and uninterested: never knew that Tackleton
Tackleton in short; but lived in the belief of an ecc
humourist who loved to have his jest with them; and who
he was the Guardian Angel of their lives, disdained to hea
word of thankfulness.

And all was Caleb's doing; all the doing of her s
father! But he too had a Cricket on his Hearth; and list
sadly to its music when the motherless Blind Child was very y
that Spirit had inspired him with the thought that even her
deprivation might be almost changed into a blessing, and th
made happy by these little means. For all the Cricket Trib
potent Spirits, even though the people who hold converse
them do not know it (which is frequently the case); and ther
not in the Unseen World, Voices more gentle and more true;

be so implicitly relied on, or that are so certain to give none
enderest counsel; as the Voices in which the Spirits of the
de and the Hearth address themselves to human kind.
aleb and his daughter were at work together in their usual
ng-room, which served them for their ordinary living-room as
and a strange place it was. There were houses in it,
ed and unfinished, for Dolls of all stations in life. Suburban
ents for Dolls of moderate means; kitchens and single
ments for Dolls of the lower classes; capital town residences
Dolls of high estate. Some of these establishments were
ly furnished according to estimate, with a view to the con-
nce of Dolls of limited income; others could be fitted on the
expensive scale, at a moment's notice, from whole shelves of
and tables, sofas, bedsteads, and upholstery. The nobility
gentry and public in general, for whose accommodation these
ents were designed, lay, here and there, in baskets, staring
ht up at the ceiling; but in denoting their degrees in society,
onfining them to their respective stations (which experience
to be lamentably difficult in real life), the makers of these
had far improved on Nature, who is often froward and per-
; for they, not resting on such arbitrary marks as satin,
-print, and bits of rag, had superadded striking personal
ences which allowed of no mistake. Thus, the Doll-lady of
action had wax limbs of perfect symmetry; but only she and
ompeers; the next grade in the social scale being made of
r; and the next of coarse linen stuff. As to the common-
e, they had just so many matches out of tinder-boxes for their
and legs, and there they were—established in their sphere at
beyond the possibility of getting out of it.
here were various other samples of his handicraft, besides
in Caleb Plummer's room. There were Noah's Arks, in which
irds and Beasts were an uncommonly tight fit, I assure you;
h they could be crammed in, anyhow, at the roof, and rattled
naken into the smallest compass. By a bold poetical license,
of these Noah's Arks had knockers on the doors; inconsistent
dages perhaps, as suggestive of morning callers and a
an, yet a pleasant finish to the outside of the building.
were scores of melancholy little carts which, when the
s went round, performed most doleful music. Many small
s, drums, and other instruments of torture; no end of cannon,
s, swords, spears, and guns. There were little tumblers in
reeches, incessantly swarming up high obstacles of red-tape,
oming down, head first, on the other side; and there were
nerable old gentlemen of respectable, not to say venerable

appearance, insanely flying over horizontal pegs, inserted, for th purpose, in their own street doors. There were beasts of all sorts horses, in particular, of every breed, from the spotted barrel four pegs, with a small tippet for a mane, to the thoroughbr rocker on his highest mettle. As it would have been hard count the dozens up dozens of grotesque figur that were ever ready commit all sorts of a surdities on the turni of a handle; so it wou have been no easy ta to mention any hum folly, vice, or weakne that h not its typ immedia or remot in Cal Plumme room. A not in exaggerat form; very litt handles wi move m and wom to as stran perfor ances, as Toy w ever ma to und take.

In t midst of these objects, Caleb and his daughter sat at work. The Bli Girl busy as a Doll's dressmaker; Caleb painting and glazing t four-pair front of a desirable family mansion.

The care imprinted in the lines of Caleb's face, and absorbed and dreamy manner, which would have sat well on so alchemist or abstruse student, were at first sight an odd contrast his occupation, and the trivialities about him. But trivial thin

invented and pursued for bread, become very serious matters of fact; and, apart from this consideration, I am not at all prepared to say, myself, that if Caleb had been a Lord Chamberlain, or a Member of Parliament, or a lawyer, or even a great speculator, he would have dealt in toys one whit less whimsical; while I have a very great doubt whether they would have been as harmless.

"So you were out in the rain last night, father, in your beautiful, new, great-coat," said Caleb's daughter.

"In my beautiful new great-coat," answered Caleb, glancing towards a clothes-line in the room, on which the sack-cloth garment previously described, was carefully hung up to dry.

"How glad I am you bought it, father!"

"And of such a tailor, too," said Caleb. "Quite a fashionable tailor. It's too good for me."

The Blind Girl rested from her work, and laughed with delight, "Too good, father! What can be too good for you?"

"I'm half ashamed to wear it though," said Caleb, watching the effect of what he said, upon her brightening face; "upon my word. When I hear the boys and people say behind me, 'Halloa! Here's a swell!' I don't know which way to look. And when the beggar wouldn't go away last night; and, when I said I was a very common man, said 'No, your Honour! Bless your Honour, don't say that!' I was quite ashamed. I really felt as if I hadn't a right to wear it."

Happy Blind Girl! How merry she was, in her exultation!

"I see you, father," she said, clasping her hands, "as plainly, as if I had the eyes I never want when you are with me. A blue coat——"

"Bright blue," said Caleb.

"Yes, yes! Bright blue!" exclaimed the girl, turning up her radiant face; "the colour I can just remember in the blessed sky! You told me it was blue before! A bright blue coat——"

"Made loose to the figure," suggested Caleb.

"Yes! Loose to the figure!" cried the Blind Girl, laughing heartily; "and in it you, dear father, with your merry eye, your smiling face, your free step, and your dark hair: looking so young and handsome!"

"Halloa! Halloa!" said Caleb. "I shall be vain, presently."

"I think you are, already," cried the Blind Girl, pointing at him, in her glee. "I know you, father! Ha ha ha! I've found you out, you see!"

How different the picture in her mind, from Caleb, as he sat observing her! She had spoken of his free step. She was right in that. For years and years, he never once had crossed that

threshold at his own slow pace, but with a footfall counterfeited for her ear; and never had he, when his heart was heaviest forgotten the light tread that was to render hers so cheerful and courageous!

Heaven knows! But I think Caleb's vague bewilderment of manner may have half originated in his having confused himself about himself and everything around him, for the love of his Blind Daughter. How could the little man be otherwise than bewildered after labouring for so many years to destroy his own identity, and that of all the objects that had any bearing on it!

"There we are," said Caleb, falling back a pace or two to form the better judgment of his work; "as near the real thing as six penn'orth of halfpence is to sixpence. What a pity that the whole front of the house opens at once! If there was only a staircase in it now, and regular doors to the rooms to go in at! But that's the worst of my calling, I'm always deluding myself, and swindling myself."

"You are speaking quite softly. You are not tired, father?"

"Tired," echoed Caleb, with a great burst of animation, "what should tire me, Bertha? *I* was never tired. What does it mean?"

To give the greater force to his words, he checked himself in an involuntary imitation of two half-length stretching and yawning figures on the mantel-shelf, who were represented as in one eternal state of weariness from the waist upwards; and hummed a fragment of a song. It was a Bacchanalian song, something about a Sparkling Bowl; and he sang it with an assumption of a Devil-may-care voice, that made his face a thousand times more meagre and more thoughtful than ever.

"What! You're singing, are you?" said Tackleton, putting his head in, at the door. "Go it! *I* can't sing."

Nobody would have suspected him of it. He hadn't what is generally termed a singing face, by any means.

"I can't afford to sing," said Tackleton. "I'm glad you can. I hope you can afford to work too. Hardly time for both, I should think?"

"If you could only see him, Bertha, how he's winking at me!" whispered Caleb. "Such a man to joke! you'd think, if you didn't know him, he was in earnest—wouldn't you now?"

The Blind Girl smiled, and nodded.

"The bird that can sing and won't sing, must be made to sing they say," grumbled Tackleton. "What about the owl that can't sing, and oughtn't to sing, and will sing; is there anything that *he* should be made to do?"

"The extent to which he's winking at this moment!" whispered leb to his daughter. "Oh, my gracious!"

"Always merry and light-hearted with us!" cried the smiling rtha.

"Oh, you're there, are you?" answered Tackleton. "Poor iot!"

He really did believe she was an Idiot; and he founded the lief, I can't say whether consciously or not, upon her being fond him.

"Well! and being there,—how are you?" said Tackleton; in s grudging way.

"Oh! well; quite well. And as happy as even you can wish e to be. As happy as you would make the whole world, if you uld!"

"Poor Idiot!" muttered Tackleton. "No gleam of reason. ot a gleam!"

The Blind Girl took his hand and kissed it; held it for a oment in her own two hands; and laid her cheek against it nderly, before releasing it. There was such unspeakable affection d such fervent gratitude in the act, that Tackleton himself was oved to say, in a milder growl than usual:

"What's the matter now?"

"I stood it close beside my pillow when I went to sleep last ght, and remembered it in my dreams. And when the day oke, and the glorious red sun—the *red* sun, father?"

"Red in the mornings and the evenings, Bertha," said poor leb, with a woeful glance at his employer.

"When it rose, and the bright light I almost fear to strike my- lf against in walking, came into the room, I turned the little tree wards it, and blessed Heaven for making things so precious, and essed you for sending them to cheer me!"

"Bedlam broke loose!" said Tackleton under his breath. "We all arrive at the strait-waistcoat and mufflers soon. We're getting !"

Caleb, with his hands hooked loosely in each other, stared cantly before him while his daughter spoke, as if he really were certain (I believe he was) whether Tackleton had done anything deserve her thanks, or not. If he could have been a perfectly e agent, at that moment, required, on pain of death, to kick the y-merchant, or fall at his feet, according to his merits, I believe would have been an even chance which course he would have ken. Yet Caleb knew that with his own hands he had brought e little rose-tree home for her, so carefully; and that with his n lips he had forged the innocent deception which should help

to keep her from suspecting how much, how very much, he eve day denied himself, that she might be the happier.

"Bertha!" said Tackleton, assuming, for the nonce, a litt cordiality. "Come here."

"Oh! I can come straight to you! You needn't guide me she rejoined.

"Shall I tell you a secret, Bertha?"

"If you will!" she answered, eagerly.

How bright the darkened face! How adorned with light, t listening head!

"This is the day on which little what's-her-name, the spo child; Peerybingle's wife; pays her regular visit to you—mak her fantastic Pic-Nic here; an't it?" said Tackleton, with a stro expression of distaste for the whole concern.

"Yes," replied Bertha. "This is the day."

"I thought so!" said Tackleton. "I should like to join t party."

"Do you hear that, father!" cried the Blind Girl in ecstasy.

"Yes, yes, I hear it," murmured Caleb, with the fixed look a sleep-walker; "but I don't believe it. It's one of my lies, I' no doubt."

"You see I—I want to bring the Peerybingles a little m into company with May Fielding," said Tackleton. "I am goi to be married to May."

"Married!" cried the Blind Girl, starting from him.

"She's such a con-founded Idiot," muttered Tackleton, "th I was afraid she'd never comprehend me. Ah, Bertha! Marri Church, parson, clerk, beadle, glass-coach, bells, breakfast, bri cake, favours, marrow-bones, cleavers, and all the rest of the to foolery. A wedding, you know; a wedding. Don't you kn what a wedding is?"

"I know," replied the Blind Girl, in a gentle tone. "I und stand!"

"Do you?" muttered Tackleton. "It's more than I expect Well! On that account I want to join the party, and to bri May and her mother. I'll send in a little something or oth before the afternoon. A cold leg of mutton, or some comforta trifle of that sort. You'll expect me?"

"Yes," she answered.

She had drooped her head, and turned away; and so sto with her hands crossed, musing.

"I don't think you will," muttered Tackleton, looking at h "for you seem to have forgotten all about it, already. Caleb!"

"I may venture to say I'm here, I suppose," thought Caleb. 'Sir!"

"Take care she don't forget what I've been saying to her."

"*She* never forgets," returned Caleb. "It's one of the few hings she an't clever in."

"Every man thinks his own geese swans," observed the Toy-nerchant, with a shrug. "Poor devil!"

Having delivered himself of which remark, with infinite con-empt, old Gruff and Tackleton withdrew.

Bertha remained where he had left her, lost in meditation. The aiety had vanished from her downcast face, and it was very sad. Three or four times, she shook her head, as if bewailing some emembrance or some loss; but her sorrowful reflections found no ent in words.

It was not until Caleb had been occupied, some time, in yoking team of horses to a waggon by the summary process of nailing he harness to the vital parts of their bodies, that she drew near o his working-stool, and sitting down beside him, said:

"Father, I am lonely in the dark. I want my eyes: my patient, illing eyes."

"Here they are," said Caleb. "Always ready. They are more ours than mine, Bertha, any hour in the four and twenty. What hall your eyes do for you, dear?"

"Look round the room, father."

"All right," said Caleb. "No sooner said than done, Bertha."

"Tell me about it."

"It's much the same as usual," said Caleb. "Homely, but very ug. The gay colours on the walls; the bright flowers on the kates and dishes; the shining wood, where there are beams or nels; the general cheerfulness and neatness of the building; make very pretty."

Cheerful and neat it was wherever Bertha's hands could busy emselves. But nowhere else were cheerfulness and neatness ssible, in the old crazy shed which Caleb's fancy so transformed.

"You have your working dress on, and are not so gallant as hen you wear the handsome coat?" said Bertha, touching him.

"Not quite so gallant," answered Caleb. "Pretty brisk ough."

"Father," said the Blind Girl, drawing close to his side, and raling one arm round his neck. "Tell me something about May. e is very fair?"

"She is indeed," said Caleb. And she was indeed. It was ite a rare thing to Caleb, not to have to draw on his invention.

"Her hair is dark," said Bertha, pensively, "darker than mine.

Her voice is sweet and musical, I know. I have often lov
hear it. Her shape——"

"There's not a Doll's in all the room to equal it," said C
"And her eyes!"—

He stopped; for Bertha had drawn closer round his neck;
from the arm that clung about him, came a warning pressure v
he understood too well.

He coughed a moment, hammered for a moment, and the
back upon the song about the Sparkling Bowl; his infa
resource in all such difficulties.

"Our friend, father; our benefactor. I am never tired
know of hearing about him.—Now was I, ever?" she said, ha

"Of course not," answered Caleb. "And with reason."

"Ah! With how much reason!" cried the Blind Girl.
such fervency, that Caleb, though his motives were so pure,
not endure to meet her face; but dropped his eyes, as if she
have read in them his innocent deceit.

"Then tell me again about him, dear father," said Be
"Many times again! His face is benevolent, kind, and te
Honest and true, I am sure it is. The manly heart that tri
cloak all favours with a show of roughness and unwillingness,
in its every look and glance."

"And makes it noble," added Caleb in his quiet desperati

"And makes it noble!" cried the Blind Girl. "He is
than May, father."

"Ye-es," said Caleb, reluctantly. "He's a little older
May. But that don't signify."

"Oh father, yes! To be his patient companion in infirmit
age; to be his gentle nurse in sickness, and his constant frie
suffering and sorrow; to know no weariness in working fo
sake; to watch him, tend him; sit beside his bed and talk to
awake; and pray for him asleep; what privileges these woul
What opportunities for proving all her truth and her devoti
him! Would she do all this, dear father?"

"No doubt of it," said Caleb.

"I love her, father; I can love her from my soul!" excla
the Blind Girl. And saying so, she laid her poor blind fa
Caleb's shoulder, and so wept and wept, that he was almost
to have brought that tearful happiness upon her.

In the mean time, there had been a pretty sharp commoti
John Peerybingle's; for little Mrs. Peerybingle naturally co
think of going anywhere without the Baby; and to get the
under weigh, took time. Not that there was much of the
speaking of it as a thing of weight and measure: but there

ast deal to do about and about it, and it all had to be done by easy tages. For instance: when the Baby was got, by hook and by took, to a certain point of dressing, and you might have rationally upposed that another touch or two would finish him off, and turn im out a tip-top Baby challenging the world, he was unexpectedly xtinguished in a flannel cap, and hustled off to bed; where he immered (so to speak) between two blankets for the best part of n hour. From this state of inaction he was then recalled, shining ery much and roaring violently, to partake of—well! I would ather say, if you'll permit me to speak generally—of a slight past. After which, he went to sleep again. Mrs. Peerybingle ook advantage of this interval, to make herself as smart in a small ay as ever you saw anybody in all your life; and, during the same hort truce, Miss Slowboy insinuated herself into a spencer of a shion so surprising and ingenious, that it had no connection with erself, or anything else in the universe, but was a shrunken, dog's-ared, independent fact, pursuing its lonely course without the least gard to anybody. By this time, the Baby, being all alive again, as invested, by the united efforts of Mrs. Peerybingle and Miss owboy, with a cream-coloured mantle for its body, and a sort of nkeen raised-pie for its head; and so in course of time they all ree got down to the door, where the old horse had already taken ore than the full value of his day's toll out of the Turnpike Trust, tearing up the road with his impatient autographs—and whence axer might be dimly seen in the remote perspective, standing oking back, and tempting him to come on without orders.

As to a chair, or anything of that kind for helping Mrs. Peerybingle into the cart, you know very little of John, I flatter myself, you think *that* was necessary. Before you could have seen him t her from the ground, there she was in her place, fresh and rosy, ying, "John! How CAN you! Think of Tilly!"

If I might be allowed to mention a young lady's legs, on any rms, I would observe of Miss Slowboy's that there was a fatality out them which rendered them singularly liable to be grazed; d that she never effected the smallest ascent or descent, without cording the circumstance upon them with a notch, as Robinson usoe marked the days upon his wooden calendar. But as this ght be considered ungenteel, I'll think of it.

"John? You've got the basket with the Veal and Ham-Pie and ings; and the bottles of Beer?" said Dot. "If you haven't, you st turn round again, this very minute."

"You're a nice little article," returned the Carrier, "to be king about turning round, after keeping me a full quarter of an ur behind my time."

"I am sorry for it, John," said Dot in a great bustle, "but I really could not think of going to Bertha's—I would not do it John, on any account—without the Veal and Ham-Pie and things and the bottles of Beer. Way!"

This monosyllable was addressed to the horse, who didn't mind it at all.

"Oh *do* way John!" said Mrs. Peerybingle. "Please!"

"It'll be time enough to do that," returned John, "when I begin to leave things behind me. The basket's here, safe enough."

"What a hard-hearted monster you must be, John, not to have said so, at once, and save me such a turn! I declared I wouldn't go to Bertha's without the Veal and Ham-Pie and things, and the bottles of Beer, for any money. Regularly once a fortnight ever since we have been married, John, have we made our little Pic-Nic there. If anything was to go wrong with it, I should almost think we were never to be lucky again."

"It was a kind thought in the first instance," said the Carrier, "and I honour you for it, little woman."

"My dear John," replied Dot, turning very red. "Don't talk about honouring *me*. Good Gracious!"

"By the bye—" observed the Carrier. "That old gentleman,"—Again so visibly, and instantly embarrassed.

"He's an odd fish," said the Carrier, looking straight along the road before them. "I can't make him out. I don't believe there's any harm in him."

"None at all. I'm—I'm sure there's none at all."

"Yes?" said the Carrier, with his eyes attracted to her face by the great earnestness of her manner. "I am glad you feel so certain of it, because it's a confirmation to me. It's curious that he should have taken it into his head to ask leave to go on lodging with us; an't it? Things come about so strangely."

"So very strangely," she rejoined in a low voice: scarcely audible.

"However, he's a good-natured old gentleman," said John, "and pays as a gentleman, and I think his word is to be relied upon, like a gentleman's. I had quite a long talk with him this morning: he can hear me better already, he says, as he gets more used to my voice. He told me a great deal about himself, and told him a good deal about myself, and a rare lot of questions he asked me. I gave him information about my having two beats, you know, in my business; one day to the right from our house and back again; another day to the left from our house and back again (for he's a stranger and don't know the names of places about here); and he seemed quite pleased. 'Why, then I shall

eturning home to-night your way,' he says, 'when I thought you'd e coming in an exactly opposite direction. That's capital. I nay trouble you for another lift perhaps, but I'll engage not to all so sound asleep again.' He *was* sound asleep, sure-ly!—Dot! hat are you thinking of?"

"Thinking of, John? I—I was listening to you."

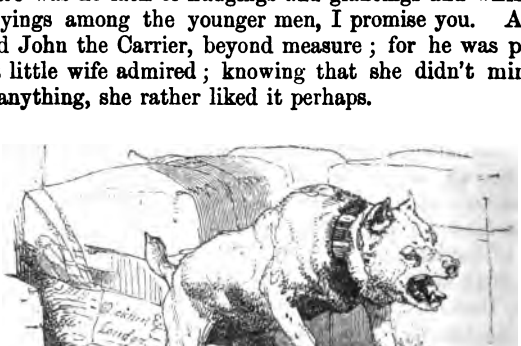
"Oh! That's all right!" said the honest Carrier. "I was fraid, from the look of your face, that I had gone rambling on so ong, as to set you thinking about something else. I was very ear it, I'll be bound."

Dot making no reply, they jogged on, for some little time, in ilence. But it was not easy to remain silent very long in John eerybingle's cart, for everybody on the road had something to ay; though it might only be "How are you!" and indeed it was ery often nothing else, still, to give that back again in the right pirit of cordiality, required, not merely a nod and a smile, but as holesome an action of the lungs withal, as a long-winded arliamentary speech. Sometimes, passengers on foot, or horse-ack, plodded on a little way beside the cart, for the express urpose of having a chat; and then there was a great deal to be aid, on both sides.

Then, Boxer gave occasion to more good-natured recognitions of nd by the Carrier, than half-a-dozen Christians could have done! verybody knew him, all along the road—especially the fowls and igs, who when they saw him approaching, with his body all on ne side, and his ears pricked up inquisitively, and that knob of a ail making the most of itself in the air, immediately withdrew nto remote back settlements, without waiting for the honour of a earer acquaintance. He had business everywhere; going down ll the turnings, looking into all the wells, bolting in and out of ll the cottages, dashing into the midst of all the Dame-Schools, attering all the pigeons, magnifying the tails of all the cats, and otting into the public-houses like a regular customer. Wherever e went, somebody or other might have been heard to cry, 'Halloa! Here's Boxer!" and out came that somebody forthwith, ccompanied by at least two or three other somebodies, to give ohn Peerybingle and his pretty wife, Good Day.

The packages and parcels for the errand cart, were numerous; nd there were many stoppages to take them in and give them ut; which were not by any means the worst parts of the journey. ome people were so full of expectation about their parcels, and ther people were so full of wonder about their parcels, and other eople were so full of inexhaustible directions about their parcels, nd John had such a lively interest in all the parcels, that it was

as good as a play. Likewise, there were articles to carry, wh
required to be considered and discussed, and in reference to
adjustment and disposition of which, councils had to be holden
the Carrier and the senders: at which Boxer usually assisted,
short fits of the closest attention, and long fits of tearing rou
and round the assembled sages and barking himself hoarse.
all these little incidents, Dot was the amused and open-e
spectatress from her chair in the cart; and as she sat th
looking on: a charming little portrait framed to admiration by
tilt: there was no lack of nudgings and glancings and whisperi
and envyings among the younger men, I promise you. And t
delighted John the Carrier, beyond measure; for he was proud
have his little wife admired; knowing that she didn't mind i
that, if anything, she rather liked it perhaps.



The trip was a little foggy, to be sure, in the January weath
and was raw and cold. But who cared for such trifles? N
Dot, decidedly. Not Tilly Slowboy, for she deemed sitting i
cart, on any terms, to be the highest point of human joys;
crowning circumstance of earthly hopes. Not the Baby, I'll
sworn; for it's not in Baby nature to be warmer or more so
asleep, though its capacity is great in both respects, than
blessed young Peerybingle was, all the way.

You couldn't see very far in the fog, of course; but you c
see a great deal, oh a great deal! It's astonishing how much
may see, in a thicker fog than that, if you will only take
trouble to look for it. Why, even to sit watching for the Fa
rings in the fields, and for the patches of hoar-frost still linge
in the shade, near hedges and by trees, was a pleasant occupati
to make no mention of the unexpected shapes in which the t
themselves came starting out of the mist, and glided into it ag

he hedges were tangled and bare, and waved a multitude of lighted garlands in the wind; but there was no discouragement i this. It was agreeable to contemplate; for it made the fireside armer in possession, and the summer greener in expectancy. he river looked chilly; but it was in motion, and moving at a ood pace; which was a great point. The canal was rather slow nd torpid; that must be admitted. Never mind. It would eeze the sooner when the frost set fairly in, and then there ould be skating, and sliding; and the heavy old barges, frozen p somewhere, near a wharf, would smoke their rusty iron himney-pipes all day, and have a lazy time of it.

In one place, there was a great mound of weeds or stubble urning; and they watched the fire, so white in the day time, aring through the fog, with only here and there a dash of red in ; until, in consequence as she observed of the smoke "getting p her nose," Miss Slowboy choked—she could do anything of hat sort, on the smallest provocation—and woke the Baby, who ouldn't go to sleep again. But Boxer, who was in advance some uarter of a mile or so, had already passed the outposts of the own, and gained the corner of the street where Caleb and his aughter lived; and long before they reached the door, he and the lind Girl were on the pavement waiting to receive them.

Boxer, by the way, made certain delicate distinctions of his wn, in his communication with Bertha, which persuade me fully hat he knew her to be blind. He never sought to attract her ttention by looking at her, as he often did with other people, but uched her, invariably. What experience he could ever have had f blind people or blind dogs, I don't know. He had never lived ith a blind master; nor had Mr. Boxer the elder, nor Mrs. Boxer, or any of his respectable family on either side, ever been visited ith blindness, that I am aware of. He may have found it out r himself, perhaps, but he had got hold of it somehow; and erefore he had hold of Bertha too, by the skirt, and kept hold, ntil Mrs. Peerybingle and the Baby, and Miss Slowboy, and the asket, were all got safely within doors.

May Fielding was already come; and so was her mother—a ttle querulous chip of an old lady with a peevish face, who, in ght of having preserved a waist like a bedpost, was supposed to e a most transcendent figure; and who, in consequence of having ce been better off, or of labouring under an impression that she ight have been, if something had happened which never did ppen, and seemed to have never been particularly likely to come pass—but it's all the same—was very genteel and patronising deed. Gruff and Tackleton was also there, doing the agreeable,

with the evident sensation of being as perfectly at home, and unquestionably in his own element, as a fresh young salmon the top of the Great Pyramid.

"May! My dear old friend!" cried Dot, running up to me her. "What a happiness to see you!"

Her old friend was, to the full, as hearty and as glad as sh and it really was, if you'll believe me, quite a pleasant sight to them embrace. Tackleton was a man of taste, beyond all questio May was very pretty.

You know sometimes, when you are used to a pretty face, ho when it comes into contact and comparison with another pret face, it seems for the moment to be homely and faded, and hard to deserve the high opinion you have had of it. Now, this w not at all the case, either with Dot or May; for May's face set Dot's, and Dot's face set off May's, so naturally and agreeabl that, as John Peerybingle was very near saying when he ca into the room, they ought to have been born sisters—which w the only improvement you could have suggested.

Tackleton had brought his leg of mutton, and, wonderful relate, a tart besides—but we don't mind a little dissipation wh our brides are in the case; we don't get married every day—a in addition to these dainties, there were the Veal and Ham-P and "things," as Mrs. Peerybingle called them; which we chiefly nuts and oranges, and cakes, and such small deer. Wh the repast was set forth on the board, flanked by Caleb's contrib tion, which was a great wooden bowl of smoking potatoes (he w prohibited, by solemn compact, from producing any other vianda Tackleton led his intended mother-in-law to the Post of Honou For the better gracing of this place at the high Festival, th majestic old Soul had adorned herself with a cap, calculated inspire the thoughtless with sentiments of awe. She also wo her gloves. But let us be genteel, or die!

Caleb sat next his daughter; Dot and her old schoolfello were side by side; the good Carrier took care of the bottom of th table. Miss Slowboy was isolated, for the time being, from eve article of furniture but the chair she sat on, that she might ha nothing else to knock the Baby's head against.

As Tilly stared about her at the dolls and toys, they stare at her and at the company. The venerable old gentlemen at th street doors (who were all in full action) showed especial intere in the party: pausing occasionally before leaping, as if they we listening to the conversation: and then plunging wildly over an over, a great many times, without halting for breath,—as in frantic state of delight with the whole proceedings.

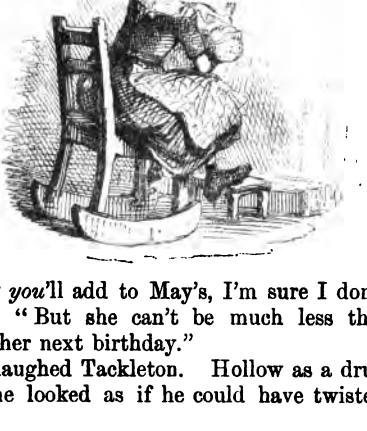
Certainly, if these old gentlemen were inclined to have a
endish joy in the contemplation of Tackleton's discomfiture, they
ad good reason to be satisfied. Tackleton couldn't get on at all;
nd the more cheerful his intended bride became in Dot's society,
he less he liked it, though he had brought them together for that
urpose. For he was a regular Dog in the Manger, was Tackleton;
nd when they laughed, and he couldn't, he took it into his head,
nmediately, that they must be laughing at him.

"Ah May!" said Dot. "Dear dear, what changes! To talk
f those merry school-days makes one young again."

"Why, you an't particularly old, at any time; are you?" said
'ackleton.

"Look at my sober plodding husband there," returned Dot.
He adds twenty years to my age at least. Don't you, John?"

"Forty," John replied.



"How many *you*'ll add to May's, I'm sure I don't know," said
ot, laughing. "But she can't be much less than a hundred
ars of age on her next birthday."

"Ha ha!" laughed Tackleton. Hollow as a drum, that laugh
lough. And he looked as if he could have twisted Dot's neck:
mfortably.

"Dear dear!" said Dot. "Only to remember how we used
talk, at school, about the husbands we would choose. I don't
now how young, and how handsome, and how gay, and how
vely, mine was not to be! And as to May's—! Ah dear! I
n't know whether to laugh or cry, when I think what silly girls
e were."

May seemed to know which to do; for the colour flashed into
r face, and tears stood in her eyes.

"Even the very persons themselves—real live young m were fixed on sometimes," said Dot. "We little thought things would come about. I never fixed on John I'm sur never so much as thought of him. And if I had told you, were ever to be married to Mr. Tackleton, why you'd have sla me. Wouldn't you, May?"

Though May didn't say yes, she certainly didn't say n express no, by any means.

Tackleton laughed—quite shouted, he laughed so loud. Peerybingle laughed too, in his ordinary good-natured and tented manner; but his was a mere whisper of a laugh Tackleton's.

"You couldn't help yourselves, for all that. You cou resist us, you see," said Tackleton. "Here we are! Here are! Where are your gay young bridegrooms now!"

"Some of them are dead," said Dot; "and some of them gotten. Some of them, if they could stand among us at moment, would not believe we were the same creatures; w not believe that what they saw and heard was real, and we c forget them so. No! they would not believe one word of it!"

"Why, Dot!" exclaimed the Carrier. "Little woman!"

She had spoken with such earnestness and fire, that she s in need of some recalling to herself, without doubt. Her husb check was very gentle, for he merely interfered, as he suppose shield old Tackleton; but it proved effectual, for she stopped, said no more. There was an uncommon agitation, even in silence, which the wary Tackleton, who had brought his half- eye to bear upon her, noted closely; and remembered to purpose too, as you will see.

May uttered no word, good or bad, but sat quite still, with eyes cast down; and made no sign of interest in what had pa The good lady her mother now interposed: observing, in the instance, that girls were girls, and bygones bygones, and tha long as young people were young and thoughtless, they w probably conduct themselves like young and thoughtless pers with two or three other positions of a no less sound and in trovertible character. She then remarked, in a devout spirit, she thanked Heaven she had always found in her daughter Ma dutiful and obedient child; for which she took no credit to her though she had every reason to believe it was entirely owin herself. With regard to Mr. Tackleton she said, That he w a moral point of view an undeniable individual; and That he in an eligible point of view a son-in-law to be desired, no on their senses could doubt. (She was very emphatic here.)

egard to the family into which he was so soon about, after me solicitation, to be admitted, she believed Mr. Tackleton new that, although reduced in purse, it had some pretensions to entility; and if certain circumstances, not wholly unconnected, he would go so far as to say, with the Indigo Trade, but to hich she would not more particularly refer, had happened fferently, it might perhaps have been in possession of Wealth. he then remarked that she would not allude to the past, and ould not mention that her daughter had for some time rejected he suit of Mr. Tackleton; and that she would not say a great any other things which she did say, at great length. Finally, e delivered it as the general result of her observation and perience, that those marriages in which there was least of what as romantically and sillily called love, were always the happiest; d that she anticipated the greatest possible amount of bliss—not pturous bliss; but the solid, steady-going article—from the proaching nuptials. She concluded by informing the company at to-morrow was the day she had lived for, expressly; and that hen it was over, she would desire nothing better than to be cked up and disposed of, in any genteel place of burial.

As these remarks were quite unanswerable: which is the ppy property of all remarks that are sufficiently wide of the rpose: they changed the current of the conversation, and verted the general attention to the Veal and Ham-Pie, the cold utton, the potatoes, and the tart. In order that the bottled er might not be slighted, John Peerybingle proposed To-morrow: e Wedding-Day; and called upon them to drink a bumper to it, fore he proceeded on his journey.

For you ought to know that he only rested there, and gave the horse a bait. He had to go some four or five miles farther ; and when he returned in the evening, he called for Dot, and k another rest on his way home. This was the order of the on all the Pic-Nic occasions, and had been, ever since their titution.

There were two persons present, beside the bride and bridegroom ct, who did but indifferent honour to the toast. One of these Dot, too flushed and discomposed to adapt herself to any all occurrence of the moment; the other, Bertha, who rose up riedly, before the rest, and left the table.

"Good bye!" said stout John Peerybingle, pulling on his adnought coat. "I shall be back at the old time. Good bye !"

"Good bye, John," returned Caleb.

He seemed to say it by rote, and to wave his hand in the same

unconscious manner; for he stood observing Bertha with an an wondering face, that never altered its expression.

"Good bye, young shaver!" said the jolly Carrier, be down to kiss the child; which Tilly Slowboy, now intent her knife and fork, had deposited asleep (and strange to say, out damage) in a little cot of Bertha's furnishing; "good Time will come, I suppose, when *you*'ll turn out into the cold little friend, and leave your old father to enjoy his pipe an rheumatics in the chimney-corner; eh? Where's Dot?"

"I'm here, John!" she said, starting.

"Come, come!" returned the Carrier, clapping his sou hands. "Where's the pipe?"

"I quite forgot the pipe, John."

Forgot the pipe! Was such a wonder ever heard of! Forgot the pipe!

"I'll—I'll fill it directly. It's soon done."

But it was not so soon done, either. It lay in the usual p the Carrier's dreadnought pocket; with the little pouch, he work, from which she was used to fill it; but her hand sho that she entangled it (and yet her hand was small enough to come out easily, I am sure), and bungled terribly. The filli the pipe and lighting it; those little offices in which I have mended her discretion, if you recollect; were vilely done, fro to last. During the whole process, Tackleton stood lookin maliciously with the half-closed eye; which, whenever it me —or caught it, for it can hardly be said to have ever met a eye: rather being a kind of trap to snatch it up—augmente confusion in a most remarkable degree.

"Why, what a clumsy Dot you are, this afternoon!" John. "I could have done it better myself, I verily believe

With these good-natured words, he strode away; and pre was heard, in company with Boxer, and the old horse, an cart, making lively music down the road. What time the d Caleb still stood, watching his Blind Daughter, with the expression on his face.

"Bertha!" said Caleb, softly. "What has happened? changed you are, my darling, in a few hours—since this mo *You* silent and dull all day! What is it? Tell me!"

"Oh father, father!" cried the Blind Girl, bursting into "Oh my hard, hard fate!"

Caleb drew his hand across his eyes before he ans her.

"But think how cheerful and how happy you have been, Be How good, and how much loved, by many people."

"That strikes me to the heart, dear father! Always so mindful of me! Always so kind to me!"

Caleb was very much perplexed to understand her.

"To be—to be blind, Bertha, my poor dear," he faltered, "is a great affliction; but——"

"I have never felt it!" cried the Blind Girl. "I have never felt it, in its fulness. Never! I have sometimes wished that I could see you, or could see him; only once, dear father; only for one little minute; that I might know what it is I treasure up," she laid her hands upon her breast, "and hold here! That I might be sure I have it right! And sometimes (but then I was a child) I have wept, in my prayers at night, to think that when your images ascended from my heart to Heaven, they might not be the true resemblance of yourselves. But I have never had these feelings long. They have passed away and left me tranquil and contented."

"And they will again," said Caleb.

"But father! Oh my good, gentle father, bear with me, if I am wicked!" said the Blind Girl. "This is not the sorrow that do weighs me down!"

Her father could not choose but let his moist eyes overflow; she was so earnest and pathetic. But he did not understand her, yet.

"Bring her to me," said Bertha. "I cannot hold it closed and shut within myself. Bring her to me, father!"

She knew he hesitated, and said, "May. Bring May!"

May heard the mention of her name, and coming quietly towards her, touched her on the arm. The Blind Girl turned immediately, and held her by both hands.

"Look into my face, Dear heart, Sweet heart!" said Bertha. "Read it with your beautiful eyes, and tell me if the Truth is written on it."

"Dear Bertha, Yes!"

The Blind Girl still, upturning the blank sightless face, down which the tears were coursing fast, addressed her in these words:

"There is not, in my Soul, a wish or thought that is not for your good, bright May! There is not, in my Soul, a grateful recollection stronger than the deep remembrance which is stored here, of the many many times when, in the full pride of Sight and Beauty, you have had consideration for Blind Bertha, even when we two were children, or when Bertha was as much a child as ever blindness can be! Every blessing on your head! Light on your happy course! Not the less, my dear May;" and she drew towards her, in a closer grasp; "not the less, my bird,

because, to-day, the knowledge that you are to be His wife h wrung my heart almost to breaking! Father, May, Mary! c forgive me that it is so, for the sake of all he has done to relie the weariness of my dark life: and for the sake of the belief yc have in me, when I call Heaven to witness that I could not wi him married to a wife more worthy of his Goodness!"

While speaking, she had released May Fielding's hands, a clasped her garments in an attitude of mingled supplication a love. Sinking lower and lower down, as she proceeded in h strange confession, she dropped at last at the feet of her frien and hid her blind face in the folds of her dress.

"Great Power!" exclaimed her father, smitten at one blo with the truth, "have I deceived her from her cradle, but to bre her heart at last!"

It was well for all of them that Dot, that beaming, usefu busy little Dot—for such she was, whatever faults she had, a however you may learn to hate her, in good time—it was well f all of them, I say, that she was there: or where this would ha ended, it were hard to tell. But Dot, recovering her self-possessio interposed, before May could reply, or Caleb say another word.

"Come come, dear Bertha! come away with me! Give h your arm, May. So! How composed she is, you see, alread and how good it is of her to mind us," said the cheery little woma kissing her upon the forehead. "Come away, dear Berth Come! and here's her good father will come with her; wo you, Caleb? To—be—sure!"

Well, well! she was a noble little Dot in such things, and must have been an obdurate nature that could have withstood h influence. When she had got poor Caleb and his Bertha aw that they might comfort and console each other, as she knew th only could, she presently came bouncing back,—the saying is, fresh as any daisy; *I* say fresher—to mount guard over th bridling little piece of consequence in the cap and gloves, a prevent the dear old creature from making discoveries.

"So bring me the precious Baby, Tilly," said she, drawing chair to the fire; "and while I have it in my lap, here's M Fielding, Tilly, will tell me all about the management of Babi and put me right in twenty points where I'm as wrong as can Won't you, Mrs. Fielding?"

Not even the Welsh Giant, who according to the popu expression, was so "slow" as to perform a fatal surgical operati upon himself, in emulation of a juggling-trick achieved by his ar enemy at breakfast-time; not even he fell half so readily into t Snare prepared for him, as the old lady did into this artful Pitf

The fact of Tackleton having walked out; and furthermore, of two or three people having been talking together at a distance, for two minutes, leaving her to her own resources; was quite enough to have put her on her dignity, and the bewailment of that mysterious convulsion in the Indigo Trade, for four-and-twenty hours. But this becoming deference to her experience, on the part of the young mother, was so irresistible, that after a short affectation of humility, she began to enlighten her with the best grace in the world; and sitting bolt upright before the wicked Dot, she did, in half an hour, deliver more infallible domestic recipes and precepts, than would (if acted on) have utterly destroyed and done up that Young Peerybingle, though he had been an Infant Samson.

To change the theme, Dot did a little needlework—she carried the contents of a whole workbox in her pocket; however she contrived it, *I* don't know—then did a little nursing; then a little more needlework; then had a little whispering chat with May, while the old lady dozed; and so in little bits of bustle, which was quite her manner always, found it a very short afternoon. Then, as it grew dark, and as it was a solemn part of this Institution of the Pic-Nic that she should perform all Bertha's

household tasks, she trimmed the fire, and swept the hearth, s
set the tea-board out, and drew the curtain, and lighted a cand
Then, she played an air or two on a rude kind of harp, which Ca
had contrived for Bertha; and played them very well; for Nat
had made her delicate little ear as choice a one for music as
would have been for jewels, if she had had any to wear.
this time it was the established hour for having tea; and Tackle
came back again, to share the meal, and spend the evening.

Caleb and Bertha had returned some time before, and Caleb l
sat down to his afternoon's work. But he couldn't settle to
poor fellow, being anxious and remorseful for his daughter. It
touching to see him sitting idle on his working-stool, regarding
so wistfully; and always saying in his face, "Have I deceived
from her cradle, but to break her heart!"

When it was night, and tea was done, and Dot had noth
more to do in washing up the cups and saucers; in a word—fo
must come to it, and there is no use in putting it off—when
time drew nigh for expecting the Carrier's return in every sound
distant wheels; her manner changed again; her colour came
went; and she was very restless. Not as good wives are, wh
listening for their husbands. No, no, no. It was another sort
restlessness from that.

Wheels heard. A horse's feet. The barking of a dog.
gradual approach of all the sounds. The scratching paw of Bo
at the door!

"Whose step is that!" cried Bertha, starting up.

"Whose step?" returned the Carrier, standing in the por
with his brown face ruddy as a winter berry from the keen ni
air. "Why, mine."

"The other step," said Bertha. "The man's tread beh
you!"

"She is not to be deceived," observed the Carrier, laughi
"Come along, Sir. You'll be welcome, never fear!"

He spoke in a loud tone; and as he spoke, the deaf old gen
man entered.

"He's not so much a stranger, that you haven't seen
once, Caleb," said the Carrier. "You'll give him house-room
we go?"

"Oh surely John; and take it as an honour."

"He's the best company on earth, to talk secrets in," said Jo
"I have reasonable good lungs, but he tries 'em, I can tell y
Sit down, Sir. All friends here, and glad to see you!"

When he had imparted this assurance, in a voice that am
corroborated what he had said about his lungs, he added in

al tone, "A chair in the chimney-corner, and leave to sit silent and look pleasantly about him, is all he cares for. He's pleased."

ertha had been listening intently. She called Caleb to her when he had set the chair, and asked him, in a low voice, to be their visitor. When he had done so (truly now; with ulous fidelity), she moved, for the first time since he had in; and sighed; and seemed to have no further interest rning him.

he Carrier was in high spirits, good fellow that he was; and r of his little wife than ever.

A clumsy Dot she was, this afternoon!" he said, encircling ith his rough arm, as she stood, removed from the rest; "and like her somehow. See yonder, Dot!"

e pointed to the old man. She looked down. I think she bled.

He's—ha ha ha!—he's full of admiration for you!" said the er. "Talked of nothing else, the whole way here. Why, he's ve old boy. I like him for it!"

I wish he had had a better subject, John;" she said, with an y glance about the room; at Tackleton especially.

A better subject!" cried the jovial John. "There's no such . Come! off with the great-coat, off with the thick shawl, off the heavy wrappers! and a cosy half-hour by the fire! My le service, Mistress. A game at cribbage, you and I? That's y. The cards and board, Dot. And a glass of beer here, re's any left, small wife!"

is challenge was addressed to the old lady, who accepting it gracious readiness, they were soon engaged upon the game. st, the Carrier looked about him sometimes, with a smile, or nd then called Dot to peep over his shoulder at his hand, dvise him on some knotty point. But his adversary being a disciplinarian, and subject to an occasional weakness in respect gging more than she was entitled to, required such vigilance s part, as left him neither eyes nor ears to spare. Thus, his attention gradually became absorbed upon the cards; and he ght of nothing else, until a hand upon his shoulder restored o a consciousness of Tackleton.

I am sorry to disturb you—but a word, directly."

I'm going to deal," returned the Carrier. "It's a crisis."

It is," said Tackleton. "Come here, man!"

here was that in his pale face which made the other rise diately, and ask him, in a hurry, what the matter was.

Hush! John Peerybingle," said Tackleton. "I am sorry

for this. I am indeed. I have been afraid of it. I h suspected it from the first."

"What is it?" asked the Carrier, with a frightened aspect.

"Hush! I'll show you, if you'll come with me."

The Carrier accompanied him, without another word. T went across a yard, where the stars were shining; and by a li side door, into Tackleton's own counting-house, where there w glass window, commanding the ware-room: which was closed the night. There was no light in the counting-house itself, there were lamps in the long narrow ware-room; and consequen the window was bright.

"A moment!" said Tackleton. "Can you bear to look thro that window, do you think?"

"Why not?" returned the Carrier.

"A moment more," said Tackleton. "Don't commit violence. It's of no use. It's dangerous too. You're a str made man; and you might do Murder before you know it."

The Carrier looked him in the face, and recoiled a step as if had been struck. In one stride he was at the window, and saw—

Oh Shadow on the Hearth! Oh truthful Cricket! Oh p fidious Wife!

He saw her, with the old man; old no longer, but erect a gallant: bearing in his hand the false white hair that had won h way into their desolate and miserable home. He saw her listeni to him, as he bent his head to whisper in her ear; and sufferi him to clasp her round the waist, as they moved slowly down t dim wooden gallery towards the door by which they had entered He saw them stop, and saw her turn—to have the face, the f he loved so, so presented to his view!—and saw her, with her o hands, adjust the Lie upon his head, laughing, as she did it, at h unsuspicious nature!

He clenched his strong right hand at first, as if it would ha beaten down a lion. But opening it immediately again, he spre it out before the eyes of Tackleton (for he was tender of her, ev then), and so, as they passed out, fell down upon a desk, and w as weak as any infant.

He was wrapped up to the chin, and busy with his horse a parcels, when she came into the room, prepared for going home.

"Now John, dear! Good night, May! Good night, Bertha

Could she kiss them? Could she be blithe and cheerful in h parting? Could she venture to reveal her face to them without blush? Yes. Tackleton observed her closely; and she did this.

Tilly was hushing the baby; and she crossed and re-crossed Tackleton, a dozen times, repeating drowsily:

"Did the knowledge that it was to be its wifes, then, wring its hearts almost to breaking; and did its fathers deceive it from its cradles but to break its hearts at last!"

"Now Tilly, give me the Baby. Good night, Mr. Tackleton. Where's John, for Goodness' sake?"

"He's going to walk, beside the horse's head," said Tackleton; who helped her to her seat.

"My dear John. Walk? To-night?"

The muffled figure of her husband made a hasty sign in the affirmative; and the false stranger and the little nurse being in their places, the old horse moved off. Boxer, the unconscious Boxer, running on before, running back, running round and round the cart, and barking as triumphantly and merrily as ever.

When Tackleton had gone off likewise, escorting May and her mother home, poor Caleb sat down by the fire beside his daughter; anxious and remorseful at the core; and still saying in his wistful contemplation of her, "Have I deceived her from her cradle, but to break her heart at last!"

The toys that had been set in motion for the Baby, had all stopped and run down, long ago. In the faint light and silence, the imperturbably calm dolls; the agitated rocking-horses with distended eyes and nostrils; the old gentlemen at the street doors, standing, half doubled up, upon their failing knees and ankles; the wry-faced nut-crackers; the very Beasts upon their way into the Ark, in twos, like a Boarding-School out walking; might have been imagined to be stricken motionless with fantastic wonder, at Dot being false, or Tackleton beloved, under any combination of circumstances.

CHIRP THE THIRD
THE Dutch clock in the corner struck Ten, when the Carrier sat down by his fireside, So troubled and grief-worn, that he seemed to scare the Cuckoo, who, having cut his ten melodious announcements as short as possible, plunged

back into the Moorish Palace again, and clapped his little door behind him, as if the unwonted spectacle were too much for his feelings.

If the little Haymaker had been armed with the sharpest of scythes, and had cut at every stroke into the Carrier's heart, he never could have gashed and wounded it, as Dot had done.

It was a heart so full of love for her; so bound up and held together by innumerable threads of winning remembrance, spun from the daily working of her many qualities of endearment; it

was a heart in which she had enshrined herself so gently and so closely; a heart so single and so earnest in its Truth: so strong in right, so weak in wrong: that it could cherish neither passion nor revenge at first, and had only room to hold the broken image of its idol.

But slowly, slowly; as the Carrier sat brooding on his hearth, now cold and dark; other and fiercer thoughts began to rise within him, as an angry wind comes rising in the night. The Stranger was beneath his outraged roof. Three steps would take him to his chamber-door. One blow would beat it in. "You might do Murder before you know it," Tackleton had said. How could it be Murder, if he gave the Villain time to grapple with him and to hand! He was the younger man.

It was an ill-timed thought, bad for the dark mood of his mind. It was an angry thought, goading him to some avenging act, that should change the cheerful house into a haunted place which lonely travellers would dread to pass by night; and where the timid would see shadows struggling in the ruined windows when the moon was dim, and hear wild noises in the stormy weather.

He was the younger man! Yes, yes; some lover who had won the heart that *he* had never touched. Some lover of her early choice: of whom she had thought and dreamed: for whom she had pined and pined: when he had fancied her so happy by his side. Oh agony to think of it!

She had been above stairs with the Baby, getting it to bed. As he sat brooding on the hearth, she came close beside him, without his knowledge—in the turning of the rack of his great misery, he lost all other sounds—and put her little stool at his feet. He only knew it, when he felt her hand upon his own, and saw her looking up into his face.

With wonder? No. It was his first impression, and he was slain to look at her again, to set it right. No, not with wonder. With an eager and inquiring look; but not with wonder. At first it was alarmed and serious; then it changed into a strange, wild, dreadful smile of recognition of his thoughts; then there was nothing but her clasped hands on her brow, and her bent head, and falling hair.

Though the power of Omnipotence had been his to wield at that moment, he had too much of its Diviner property of Mercy in his breast, to have turned one feather's weight of it against her. But he could not bear to see her crouching down upon the little seat where he had often looked on her, with love and pride, so innocent and gay; and when she rose and left him, sobbing as she went, he felt it a relief to have the vacant place beside him rather than her

so long cherished presence. This in itself was anguish keener t all: reminding him how desolate he was become, and how great bond of his life was rent asunder.

The more he felt this, and the more he knew he could l better borne to see her lying prematurely dead before him v their little child upon her breast, the higher and the stronger his wrath against his enemy. He looked about him for a wea

There was a Gun, hanging on the wall. He took it down, moved a pace or two towards the door of the perfidious Stran room. He knew the Gun was loaded. Some shadowy idea th was just to shoot this man like a Wild Beast, seized him, and dil in his mind until it grew into a monstrous demon in comp possession of him, casting out all milder thoughts and setting its undivided empire.

That phrase is wrong. Not casting out his milder thoug but artfully transforming them. Changing them into scourge drive him on. Turning water into blood, Love into hate, Gentle into blind ferocity. Her image, sorrowing, humbled, but pleading to his tenderness and mercy with resistless power, n left his mind; but staying there, it urged him to the door; ra the weapon to his shoulder; fitted and nerved his finger to trigger; and cried "Kill him! In his bed!"

He reversed the Gun to beat the stock upon the door; already held it lifted in the air; some indistinct design was in thoughts of calling out to him to fly, for God's sake, by window—

When, suddenly, the struggling fire illumined the whole chin with a glow of light; and the Cricket on the Hearth bega chirp!

No sound he could have heard; no human voice, not even h could so have moved and softened him. The artless word which she had told him of her love for this same Cricket, v once more freshly spoken; her trembling, earnest manner at moment, was again before him; her pleasant voice—Oh wha voice it was, for making household music at the fireside of honest man!—thrilled through and through his better nature, awoke it into life and action.

He recoiled from the door, like a man walking in his sl awakened from a frightful dream; and put the Gun as Clasping his hands before his face, he then sat down again be the fire, and found relief in tears.

The Cricket on the Hearth came out into the room, and st in Fairy shape before him.

"'I love it,'" said the Fairy Voice, repeating what he v

mbered, "'for the many times I have heard it, and the many ghts its harmless music has given me.'"
She said so!" cried the Carrier. "True!'"
'This has been a happy Home, John; and I love the Cricket s sake!'"
It has been, Heaven knows," returned the Carrier. "She it happy, always,—until now."
So gracefully sweet-tempered; so domestic, joyful, busy, and -hearted!" said the Voice.

Otherwise I never could have loved her as I did," returned Carrier.
he Voice, correcting him, said "do."
he Carrier repeated "as I did." But not firmly. His ring tongue resisted his control, and would speak in its own for itself and him.
he Figure, in an attitude of invocation, raised its hand and
Upon your own hearth——"
The hearth she has blighted," interposed the Carrier.

"The hearth she has—how often!—blessed and brighte
said the Cricket: "the hearth which, but for her, were only
stones and bricks and rusty bars, but which has been, through
the Altar of your Home; on which you have nightly sacr
some petty passion, selfishness, or care, and offered up the ho
of a tranquil mind, a trusting nature, and an overflowing hear
that the smoke from this poor chimney has gone upward w
better fragrance than the richest incense that is burnt befor
richest shrines in all the gaudy Temples of this World!—
your own hearth; in its quiet sanctuary; surrounded b
gentle influences and associations; hear her! Hear me!
everything that speaks the language of your hearth and home
"And pleads for her?" inquired the Carrier.
"All things that speak the language of your hearth and h
must plead for her!" returned the Cricket. "For they spea
Truth."

And while the Carrier, with his head upon his hands, cont
to sit meditating in his chair, the Presence stood beside
suggesting his reflections by its power, and presenting them b
him, as in a Glass or Picture. It was not a solitary Pre
From the hearth-stone, from the chimney; from the clock
pipe, the kettle, and the cradle; from the floor, the walls
ceiling, and the stairs; from the cart without, and the cup
within, and the household implements; from every thing and
place with which she had ever been familiar, and with which sh
ever entwined one recollection of herself in her unhappy husb
mind; Fairies came trooping forth. Not to stand beside h
the Cricket did, but to busy and bestir themselves. To c
honour to Her image. To pull him by the skirts, and poi
it when it appeared. To cluster round it, and embrace it
strew flowers for it to tread on. To try to crown its fair head
their tiny hands. To show that they were fond of it and
it; and that there was not one ugly, wicked, or accusatory cre
to claim knowledge of it—none but their playful and appr
selves.

His thoughts were constant to her image. It was a
there.

She sat plying her needle, before the fire, and singing to
self. Such a blithe, thriving, steady little Dot! The
figures turned upon him all at once, by one consent, with
prodigious concentrated stare; and seemed to say "Is thi
light wife you are mourning for!"

There were sounds of gaiety outside: musical instruments
noisy tongues, and laughter. A crowd of young merry-m

ame pouring in; among whom were May Fielding and a score of retty girls. Dot was the fairest of them all; as young as any of hem too. They came to summon her to join their party. It was dance. If ever little foot were made for dancing, hers was, urely. But she laughed, and shook her head, and pointed to her ookery on the fire, and her table ready spread: with an exulting efiance that rendered her more charming than she was before. And so she merrily dismissed them: nodding to her would-be artners, one by one, as they passed out, with a comical indifference, enough to make them go and drown themselves immediately f they were her admirers—and they must have been so, more r less; they couldn't help it. And yet indifference was not er character. Oh no! For presently, there came a certain arrier to the door; and bless her what a welcome she bestowed pon him!

Again the staring figures turned upon him all at once, and eemed to say "Is this the wife who has forsaken you!"

A shadow fell upon the mirror or the picture: call it what ou will. A great shadow of the Stranger, as he first stood under- eath their roof; covering its surface, and blotting out all other bjects. But the nimble Fairies worked like Bees to clear it off gain; and Dot again was there. Still bright and beautiful.

Rocking her little Baby in its cradle; singing to it softly; and esting her head upon a shoulder which had its counterpart in the musing figure by which the Fairy Cricket stood.

The night—I mean the real night: not going by Fairy clocks —was wearing now; and in this stage of the Carrier's thoughts, he moon burst out, and shone brightly in the sky. Perhaps ome calm and quiet light had risen also, in his mind; and he ould think more soberly of what had happened.

Although the shadow of the Stranger fell at intervals upon the lass—always distinct, and big, and thoroughly defined—it never ell so darkly as at first. Whenever it appeared, the Fairies ttered a general cry of consternation, and plied their little arms nd legs, with inconceivable activity, to rub it out. And when- ver they got at Dot again, and showed her to him once more, right and beautiful, they cheered in the most inspiring manner.

They never showed her, otherwise than beautiful and bright, r they were Household Spirits to whom Falsehood is annihilation; nd being so, what Dot was there for them, but the one active, aming, pleasant little creature who had been the light and sun f the Carrier's Home!

The Fairies were prodigiously excited when they showed her, ith the Baby, gossiping among a knot of sage old matrons, and

thought of trying the handle of the door; and as it opened easil he peeped in, looked in, went in; and soon came running o again.

"John Peerybingle," said Tackleton, in his ear. "I hope th has been nothing—nothing rash in the night."

The Carrier turned upon him quickly.

"Because he's gone!" said Tackleton; "and the window's op I don't see any marks—to be sure it's almost on a level with t garden: but I was afraid there might have been some—so scuffle. Eh?"

He nearly shut up the expressive eye altogether; he looked him so hard. And he gave his eye, and his face, and his wh person, a sharp twist. As if he would have screwed the truth o of him.

"Make yourself easy," said the Carrier. "He went into th room last night, without harm in word or deed from me; and one has entered it since. He is away of his own free will. go out gladly at that door, and beg my bread from house to hou for life, if I could so change the past that he had never com But he has come and gone. And I have done with him!"

"Oh!—Well, I think he has got off pretty easy," s Tackleton, taking a chair.

The sneer was lost upon the Carrier, who sat down too: a shaded his face with his hand, for some little time, before proceedi

"You showed me last night," he said at length, "my wife; wife that I love; secretly——"

"And tenderly," insinuated Tackleton.

"Conniving at that man's disguise, and giving him opportunit of meeting her alone. I think there's no sight I wouldn't ha rather seen than that. I think there's no man in the world wouldn't have rather had to show it me."

"I confess to having had my suspicions always," said Tackle "And that has made me objectionable here, I know."

"But as you did show it me," pursued the Carrier, not mindi him; "and as you saw her; my wife; my wife that I love"—h voice, and eye, and hand, grew steadier and firmer as he repeat these words: evidently in pursuance of a steadfast purpose—" you saw her at this disadvantage, it is right and just that y should also see with my eyes, and look into my breast, and kn what my mind is, upon the subject. For it's settled," said t Carrier, regarding him attentively. "And nothing can shake now."

Tackleton muttered a few general words of assent, about being necessary to vindicate something or other; but he was ov

wed by the manner of his companion. Plain and unpolished as it as, it had a something dignified and noble in it, which nothing ut the soul of generous Honour, dwelling in the man, could have nparted.

"I am a plain, rough man," pursued the Carrier, "with very ttle to recommend me. I am not a clever man, as you very well now. I am not a young man. I loved my little Dot, because I ad seen her grow up, from a child, in her father's house; because knew how precious she was; because she had been my Life, for ears and years. There's many men I can't compare with, who ever could have loved my little Dot like me, I think!"

He paused, and softly beat the ground a short time with his ot, before resuming:

"I often thought that though I wasn't good enough for her, I ould make her a kind husband, and perhaps know her value etter than another; and in this way I reconciled it to myself, and me to think it might be possible that we should be married. nd in the end, it came about, and we *were* married."

"Hah!" said Tackleton, with a significant shake of his ead.

"I had studied myself; I had had experience of myself; I new how much I loved her, and how happy I should be," pursued e Carrier. "But I had not—I feel it now—sufficiently con- dered her."

"To be sure," said Tackleton. "Giddiness, frivolity, fickle- ss, love of admiration! Not considered! All left out of sight! lah!"

"You had best not interrupt me," said the Carrier, with some rmness, "till you understand me; and you're wide of doing so. ; yesterday, I'd have struck that man down at a blow, who dared breathe a word against her; to-day I'd set my foot upon his ce, if he was my brother!"

The Toy-merchant gazed at him in astonishment. He went on a softer tone:

"Did I consider," said the Carrier, "that I took her; at her e, and with her beauty; from her young companions, and the any scenes of which she was the ornament; in which she was e brightest little star that ever shone; to shut her up from day day in my dull house, and keep my tedious company? Did I nsider how little suited I was to her sprightly humour, and how earisome a plodding man like me must be, to one of her quick irit; did I consider that it was no merit in me, or claim in me, at I loved her, when everybody must, who knew her? Never. took advantage of her hopeful nature and her cheerful disposition;

and I married her. I wish I never had! For her sake; not f mine!"

The Toy-merchant gazed at him, without winking. Even t half-shut eye was open now.

"Heaven bless her!" said the Carrier, "for the cheerful co stancy with which she tried to keep the knowledge of this fro me! And Heaven help me, that, in my slow mind, I have n found it out before! Poor child! Poor Dot! *I* not to find out, who have seen her eyes fill with tears, when such a marria as our own was spoken of! I, who have seen the secret trembli on her lips a hundred times, and never suspected it, till last nigh Poor girl! That I could ever hope she would be fond of m That I could ever believe she was!"

"She made a show of it," said Tackleton. "She made suc a show of it, that to tell you the truth it was the origin of m misgivings."

And here he asserted the superiority of May Fielding, wh certainly made no sort of show of being fond of *him*.

"She has tried," said the poor Carrier, with greater emotio than he had exhibited yet; "I only now begin to know how ha she has tried; to be my dutiful and zealous wife. How good sh has been; how much she has done; how brave and strong heart she has; let the happiness I have known under this ro bear witness! It will be some help and comfort to me, when am here alone."

"Here alone?" said Tackleton. "Oh! Then you do me to take some notice of this?"

"I mean," returned the Carrier, "to do her the greatest kin ness, and make her the best reparation, in my power. I c release her from the daily pain of an unequal marriage, and th struggle to conceal it. She shall be as free as I can render her."

"Make *her* reparation!" exclaimed Tackleton, twisting an turning his great ears with his hands. "There must be somethi wrong here. You didn't say that, of course."

The Carrier set his grip upon the collar of the Toy-merchan and shook him like a reed.

"Listen to me!" he said. "And take care that you hear m right. Listen to me. Do I speak plainly?"

"Very plainly indeed," answered Tackleton.

"As if I meant it?"

"Very much as if you meant it."

"I sat upon that hearth, last night, all night," exclaimed th Carrier. "On the spot where she has often sat beside me, wi her sweet face looking into mine. I called up her whole life, d

y day; I had her dear self, in its every passage, in review before
ie. And upon my soul she is innocent, if there is One to judge
ie innocent and guilty!"

Staunch Cricket on the Hearth! Loyal household Fairies!

"Passion and distrust have left me!" said the Carrier; "and
othing but my grief remains. In an unhappy moment some old
ver, better suited to her tastes and years than I; forsaken, per-
aps, for me, against her will; returned. In an unhappy moment:
aken by surprise, and wanting time to think of what she did:
ie made herself a party to his treachery, by concealing it. Last
ight she saw him, in the interview we witnessed. It was wrong.
ut otherwise than this, she is innocent if there is Truth on
arth!"

"If that is your opinion——" Tackleton began.

"So, let her go!" pursued the Carrier. "Go, with my blessing
r the many happy hours she has given me, and my forgiveness
r any pang she has caused me. Let her go, and have the peace
' mind I wish her! She'll never hate me. She'll learn to like
e better, when I'm not a drag upon her, and she wears the chain
have riveted, more lightly. This is the day on which I took
er, with so little thought for her enjoyment, from her home. To-
ay she shall return to it; and I will trouble her no more. Her
ther and mother will be here to-day—we had made a little plan
r keeping it together—and they shall take her home. I can
ust her, there, or anywhere. She leaves me without blame, and
ie will live so I am sure. If I should die—I may perhaps while
ie is still young; I have lost some courage in a few hours—she'll
ad that I remembered her, and loved her to the last! This is
ie end of what you showed me. Now, it's over!"

"Oh no, John, not over. Do not say it's over yet! Not quite
et. I have heard your noble words. I could not steal away,
retending to be ignorant of what has affected me with such deep
ratitude. Do not say it's over, 'till the clock has struck again!"

She had entered shortly after Tackleton; and had remained
ere. She never looked at Tackleton, but fixed her eyes upon her
usband. But she kept away from him, setting as wide a space
possible between them; and though she spoke with most im-
assioned earnestness, she went no nearer to him even then. How
fferent in this, from her old self!

"No hand can make the clock which will strike again for me
e hours that are gone," replied the Carrier, with a faint smile.
But let it be so, if you will, my dear. It will strike soon. It's
little matter what we say. I'd try to please you in a harder
se than that."

"Well!" muttered Tackleton. "I must be off, for when t clock strikes again, it'll be necessary for me to be upon my way church. Good morning, John Peerybingle. I'm sorry to deprived of the pleasure of your company. Sorry for the loss, a the occasion of it too!"

"I have spoken plainly?" said the Carrier, accompanying hi to the door.

"Oh quite!"

"And you'll remember what I have said?"

"Why, if you compel me to make the observation," sa Tackleton; previously taking the precaution of getting into h chaise; "I must say that it was so very unexpected, that I'm f from being likely to forget it."

"The better for us both," returned the Carrier. "Good by I give you joy!"

"I wish I could give it to *you*," said Tackleton. "As I can't thank'ee. Between ourselves (as I told you before, eh?) I don much think I shall have the less joy in my married life, becau May hasn't been too officious about me, and too demonstrativ Good bye! Take care of yourself."

The Carrier stood looking after him until he was smaller in t distance than his horse's flowers and favours near at hand; a then, with a deep sigh, went strolling like a restless, broken ma among some neighbouring elms; unwilling to return until t clock was on the eve of striking.

His little wife, being left alone, sobbed piteously; but oft dried her eyes and checked herself, to say how good he was, ho excellent he was! and once or twice she laughed; so heartil triumphantly, and incoherently (still crying all the time), that Til was quite horrified.

"Ow if you please don't!" said Tilly. "It's enough to de and bury the Baby, so it is if you please."

"Will you bring him sometimes, to see his father, Tilly inquired her mistress; drying her eyes; "when I can't live her and have gone to my old home?"

"Ow if you please don't!" cried Tilly, throwing back her hea and bursting out into a howl; she looked at the moment uncom monly like Boxer; "Ow if you please don't! Ow, what h everybody gone and been and done with everybody, making ever body else so wretched! Ow-w-w-w!"

The soft-hearted Slowboy trailed off at this juncture, into suc a deplorable howl: the more tremendous from its long suppressio that she must infallibly have awakened the Baby, and frightene him into something serious (probably convulsions), if her eyes ha

encountered Caleb Plummer, leading in his daughter. This acle restoring her to a sense of the proprieties, she stood for few moments silent, with her mouth wide open: and then, ng off to the bed on which the Baby lay asleep, danced in a l, Saint Vitus manner on the floor, and at the same time naged with her face and head among the bedclothes: appar- deriving much relief from those extraordinary operations.

Mary!" said Bertha. "Not at the marriage!"

I told her you would not be there Mum," whispered Caleb. "I l as much last night. But bless you," said the little man, ng her tenderly by both hands, "*I* don't care for what they *I* don't believe them. There an't much of me, but that should be torn to pieces sooner than I'd trust a word against "

le put his arms about her neck and hugged her, as a child t have hugged one of his own dolls.

Bertha couldn't stay at home this morning," said Caleb. e was afraid, I know, to hear the Bells ring: and couldn't herself to be so near them on their wedding-day. So we ed in good time, and came here. I have been thinking of I have done," said Caleb, after a moment's pause; "I have blaming myself till I hardly knew what to do or where to for the distress of mind I have caused her; and I've come to conclusion that I'd better, if you'll stay with me, Mum, the , tell her the truth. You'll stay with me the while?" he ired, trembling from head to foot. "I don't know what effect ay have upon her; I don't know what she'll think of me; I know that she'll ever care for her poor father afterwards. it's best for her that she should be undeceived; and I must the consequences as I deserve!"

Mary," said Bertha, "where is your hand! Ah! Here it is; it is!" pressing it to her lips, with a smile, and drawing it ugh her arm. "I heard them speaking softly among them- s, last night, of some blame against you. They were wrong."

he Carrier's Wife was silent. Caleb answered for her.

They were wrong," he said.

I knew it!" cried Bertha, proudly. "I told them so. I ed to hear a word! Blame *her* with justice!" she pressed and between her own, and the soft cheek against her face. ! I am not so Blind as that."

Her father went on one side of her, while Dot remained upon other: holding her hand.

I know you all," said Bertha, "better than you think. But so well as her. Not even you, father. There is nothing half

so real and so true about me, as she is. If I could be restored t sight this instant, and not a word were spoken, I could choose he from a crowd! My sister!"

"Bertha, my dear!" said Caleb, "I have something on m mind I want to tell you, while we three are alone. Hear m kindly! I have a confession to make to you, my Darling."

"A confession, father?"

"I have wandered from the Truth and lost myself, my child, said Caleb, with a pitiable expression in his bewildered face. " have wandered from the Truth, intending to be kind to you; an have been cruel."

She turned her wonder-stricken face towards him, and repeate "Cruel!"

"He accuses himself too strongly, Bertha," said Dot. "You'l say so, presently. You'll be the first to tell him so."

"He cruel to me!" cried Bertha, with a smile of incredulity.

"Not meaning it, my child," said Caleb. "But I have been though I never suspected it, till yesterday. My dear Blin Daughter, hear me and forgive me! The world you live in, hear of mine, doesn't exist as I have represented it. The eyes you hav trusted in, have been false to you."

She turned her wonder-stricken face towards him still; bu drew back, and clung closer to her friend.

"Your road in life was rough, my poor one," said Caleb, "and meant to smooth it for you. I have altered objects, changed th characters of people, invented many things that never have been, t make you happier. I have had concealments from you, put decep tions on you, God forgive me! and surrounded you with fancies."

"But living people are not fancies?" she said hurriedly, an turning very pale, and still retiring from him. "You can't chang them."

"I have done so, Bertha," pleaded Caleb. "There is on person that you know, my Dove——"

"Oh father! why do you say, I know?" she answered, in tone of keen reproach. "What and whom do *I* know! I wh have no leader! I so miserably blind!"

In the anguish of her heart, she stretched out her hands, as she were groping her way; then spread them, in a manner mos forlorn and sad, upon her face.

"The marriage that takes place to-day," said Caleb, "is with stern, sordid, grinding man. A hard master to you and me, m dear, for many years. Ugly in his looks, and in his nature. Col and callous always. Unlike what I have painted him to you i everything, my child. In everything."

"Oh why," cried the Blind Girl, tortured, as it seemed, almost eyond endurance, "why did you ever do this! Why did you ever ll my heart so full, and then come in like Death, and tear away he objects of my love! Oh Heaven, how blind I am! How elpless and alone!"

Her afflicted father hung his head, and offered no reply but in is penitence and sorrow.

She had been but a short time in this passion of regret, when he Cricket on the Hearth, unheard by all but her, began to hirp. Not merrily, but in a low, faint, sorrowing way. It was o mournful, that her tears began to flow; and when the Presence hich had been beside the Carrier all night, appeared behind her, ointing to her father, they fell down like rain.

She heard the Cricket-voice more plainly soon; and was onscious, through her blindness, of the Presence hovering about er father.

"Mary," said the Blind Girl, "tell me what my home is. What it truly is."

"It is a poor place, Bertha; very poor and bare indeed. The ouse will scarcely keep out wind and rain another winter. It is s roughly shielded from the weather, Bertha," Dot continued in a ow, clear voice, "as your poor father in his sackcloth coat."

The Blind Girl, greatly agitated, rose, and led the Carrier's ttle wife aside.

"Those presents that I took such care of; that came almost at y wish, and were so dearly welcome to me," she said, trembling; where did they come from? Did you send them?"

"No."

"Who then?"

Dot saw she knew, already; and was silent. The Blind Girl read her hands before her face again. But in quite another anner now.

"Dear Mary, a moment. One moment! More this way. peak softly to me. You are true, I know. You'd not deceive e now; would you?"

"No, Bertha, indeed!"

"No, I am sure you would not. You have too much pity for e. Mary, look across the room to where we were just now; to here my father is—my father, so compassionate and loving to me -and tell me what you see."

"I see," said Dot, who understood her well; "an old man tting in a chair, and leaning sorrowfully on the back, with his ce resting on his hand. As if his child should comfort him, ertha."

"Yes, yes. She will. Go on."

"He is an old man, worn with care and work. He is a spar dejected, thoughtful, grey-haired man. I see him now, despondei and bowed down, and striving against nothing. But, Bertha, have seen him many times before; and striving hard in many wa for one great sacred object. And I honour his grey head, a bless him!"

The Blind Girl broke away from her; and throwing herse upon her knees before him, took the grey head to her breast.

"It is my sight restored. It is my sight!" she cried. " have been blind, and now my eyes are open. I never knew hin To think I might have died, and never truly seen the father, wh has been so loving to me!"

There were no words for Caleb's emotion.

"There is not a gallant figure on this earth," exclaimed th Blind Girl, holding him in her embrace, "that I would love dearly, and would cherish so devotedly, as this! The greyer, an more worn, the dearer, father! Never let them say I am blin again. There's not a furrow in his face, there's not a hair upon h head, that shall be forgotten in my prayers and thanks to Heaven!"

Caleb managed to articulate "My Bertha!"

"And in my Blindness, I believed him," said the girl, caressin him with tears of exquisite affection, "to be so different! An having him beside me, day by day, so mindful of me always, nev dreamed of this!"

"The fresh smart father in the blue coat, Bertha," said po Caleb. "He's gone!"

"Nothing is gone," she answered. "Dearest father, no Everything is here—in you. The father that I loved so well; th father that I never loved enough, and never knew; the Benefacto whom I first began to reverence and love, because he had suc sympathy for me; All are here in you. Nothing is dead to m The Soul of all that was most dear to me is here—here, with th worn face, and the grey head. And I am NOT blind, father, an longer!"

Dot's whole attention had been concentrated, during th discourse, upon the father and daughter; but looking, no towards the little Haymaker in the Moorish meadow, she saw th the clock was within a few minutes of striking; and fell, in mediately, into a nervous and excited state.

"Father," said Bertha, hesitating. "Mary."

"Yes, my dear," returned Caleb. "Here she is."

"There is no change in *her*. You never told me anything *her* that was not true?"

"I should have done it, my dear, I am afraid," returned Caleb, "if I could have made her better than she was. But I must have changed her for the worse, if I had changed her at all. Nothing could improve her, Bertha."

Confident as the Blind Girl had been when she asked the question, her delight and pride in the reply and her renewed embrace of Dot, were charming to behold.

"More changes than you think for, may happen though, my dear," said Dot. "Changes for the better, I mean; changes for great joy to some of us. You mustn't let them startle you too much, if any such should ever happen, and affect you? Are those wheels upon the road? You've a quick ear, Bertha. Are they wheels?"

"Yes. Coming very fast."

"I—I—I know you have a quick ear," said Dot, placing her hand upon her heart, and evidently talking on, as fast as she could, to hide its palpitating state, "because I have noticed it often, and because you were so quick to find out that strange step last night. Though why you should have said, as I very well recollect you did say, Bertha, 'Whose step is that!' and why you should have taken any greater observation of it than of any other step, I don't know. Though as I said just now, there are great changes in the world: great changes: and we can't do better than prepare ourselves to be surprised at hardly anything."

Caleb wondered what this meant; perceiving that she spoke to him, no less than to his daughter. He saw her, with astonishment, so fluttered and distressed that she could scarcely breathe; and holding to a chair, to save herself from falling.

"They are wheels indeed!" she panted. "Coming nearer! Nearer! Very close! And now you hear them stopping at the garden-gate! And now you hear a step outside the door—the same step, Bertha, is it not!—and now!"—

She uttered a wild cry of uncontrollable delight; and running up to Caleb put her hands upon his eyes, as a young man rushed into the room, and flinging away his hat into the air, came sweeping down upon them.

"Is it over?" cried Dot.

"Yes!"

"Happily over?"

"Yes!"

"Do you recollect the voice, dear Caleb? Did you ever hear the like of it before?" cried Dot.

"If my boy in the Golden South Americas was alive"—said Caleb, trembling.

"He is alive!" shrieked Dot, removing her hands from his eyes, and clapping them in ecstasy; "look at him! See where he stands before you, healthy and strong! Your own dear son! Your own dear living, loving brother, Bertha!"

All honour to the little creature for her transports! All honour to her tears and laughter, when the three were locked in one another's arms! All honour to the heartiness with which she met the sunburnt sailor-fellow, with his dark streaming hair, half way, and never turned her rosy little mouth aside, but suffered him to kiss it, freely, and to press her to his bounding heart!

And honour to the Cuckoo too—why not!—for bursting out of the trap-door in the Moorish Palace like a housebreaker, and hiccoughing twelve times on the assembled company, as if he had got drunk for joy!

The Carrier, entering, started back: and well he might: to find himself in such good company.

"Look, John!" said Caleb, exultingly, "look here! My own boy from the Golden South Americas! My own son! Him that you fitted out, and sent away yourself; him that you were always such a friend to!"

The Carrier advanced to seize him by the hand; but recoiling, as some feature in his face awakened a remembrance of the Deaf Man in the Cart, said:

"Edward! Was it you?"

"Now tell him all!" cried Dot. "Tell him all, Edward; and don't spare me, for nothing shall make me spare myself in his eyes, ever again."

"I was the man," said Edward.

"And could you steal, disguised, into the house of your old friend?" rejoined the Carrier. "There was a frank boy once—how many years is it, Caleb, since we heard that he was dead, and had it proved, we thought?—who never would have done that."

"There was a generous friend of mine, once: more a father to me than a friend:" said Edward, "who never would have judged me, or any other man, unheard. You were he. So I am certain you will hear me now."

The Carrier, with a troubled glance at Dot, who still kept far away from him, replied "Well! that's but fair. I will."

"You must know that when I left here, a boy," said Edward, "I was in love: and my love was returned. She was a very young girl, who perhaps (you may tell me) didn't know her own mind. But I knew mine; and I had a passion for her."

"You had!" exclaimed the Carrier. "You!"

"Indeed I had," returned the other. "And she returned it. I have ever since believed she did; and now I am sure she did."

"Heaven help me!" said the Carrier. "This is worse than all."

"Constant to her," said Edward, "and returning, full of hope, after many hardships and perils, to redeem my part of our old contract, I heard, twenty miles away, that she was false to me; that she had forgotten me; and had bestowed herself upon another and a richer man. I had no mind to reproach her; but I wished to see her, and to prove beyond dispute that this was true. I hoped she might have been forced into it, against her own desire and recollection. It would be small comfort, but it would be some, I thought: and on I came. That I might have the truth, the real truth; observing freely for myself, and judging for myself, without obstruction on the one hand, or presenting my own influence (if I had any) before her, on the other; I dressed myself unlike myself—you know how; and waited on the road—you know where. You had no suspicion of me; neither had—had she," pointing to Dot, "until I whispered in her ear at that fireside, and she so nearly betrayed me."

"But when she knew that Edward was alive, and had come back," sobbed Dot, now speaking for herself, as she had burned to do, all through this narrative; "and when she knew his purpose, she advised him by all means to keep his secret close; for his old friend John Peerybingle was much too open in his nature, and too clumsy in all artifice—being a clumsy man in general," said Dot, half laughing and half crying—"to keep it for him. And when she—that's me, John," sobbed the little woman—"told him all, and how his sweetheart had believed him to be dead; and how she had at last been over-persuaded by her mother into a marriage which the silly, dear old thing called advantageous; and when she—that's me again, John—told him they were not yet married (though close upon it), and that it would be nothing but a sacrifice if it went on, for there was no love on her side; and when he went nearly mad with joy to hear it; then she—that's me again—said she would go between them, as she had often done before in old times, John, and would sound his sweetheart and be sure that what she—me again, John—said and thought was right. And it WAS right, John! And they were brought together, John! And they were married, John, an hour ago! And here's the Bride! And Gruff and Tackleton may die a bachelor! And I'm a happy little woman, May, God bless you!"

She was an irresistible little woman, if that be anything to the purpose; and never so completely irresistible as in her present

transports. There never were congratulations so endearing an delicious, as those she lavished on herself and on the Bride.

Amid the tumult of emotions in his breast, the honest Carrie had stood, confounded. Flying, now, towards her, Dot stretche out her hand to stop him, and retreated as before.

"No, John, no! Hear all! Don't love me any more, John till you've heard every word I have to say. It was wrong t have a secret from you, John. I'm very sorry. I didn't think i any harm, till I came and sat down by you on the little stool la night; but when I knew by what was written in your face, tha you had seen me walking in the gallery with Edward, and knew what you thought; I felt how giddy and how wrong it was. Bu oh, dear John, how could you, could you, think so!"

Little woman, how she sobbed again! John Peerybingl would have caught her in his arms. But no; she wouldn't le him.

"Don't love me yet, please John! Not for a long time yet When I was sad about this intended marriage, dear, it wa because I remembered May and Edward such young lovers; an knew that her heart was far away from Tackleton. You believ that, now. Don't you, John?"

John was going to make another rush at this appeal; but sh stopped him again.

"No; keep there, please, John! When I laugh at you, as sometimes do, John; and call you clumsy, and a dear old goos and names of that sort, it's because I love you John, so well; an take such pleasure in your ways; and wouldn't see you altered i the least respect to have you made a King to-morrow."

"Hooroar!" said Caleb with unusual vigour. "My opinion!

"And when I speak of people being middle-aged, and steady John, and pretend that we are a humdrum couple, going on in jog-trot sort of way, it's only because I'm such a silly little thing John, that I like, sometimes, to act a kind of Play with Baby and all that: and make believe."

She saw that he was coming; and stopped him again. Bu she was very nearly too late.

"No, don't love me for another minute or two, if you please John! What I want most to tell you, I have kept to the last My dear, good, generous John; when we were talking the othe night about the Cricket, I had it on my lips to say, that at first did not love you quite so dearly as I do now; that when I firs came home here, I was half afraid I mightn't learn to love yo every bit as well as I hoped and prayed I might—being so very young, John. But, dear John, every day and hour, I loved yo

more and more. And if I could have loved you better than I do, the noble words I heard you say this morning, would have made me. But I can't. All the affection that I had (it was a great deal, John) I gave you, as you well deserve, long, long ago, and I have no more left to give. Now, my dear Husband, take me to your heart again! That's my home, John; and never, never think of sending me to any other!"

You never will derive so much delight from seeing a glorious little woman in the arms of a third party, as you would have felt if you had seen Dot run into the Carrier's embrace. It was the most complete, unmitigated, soul-fraught little piece of earnestness that ever you beheld in all your days.

You may be sure the Carrier was in a state of perfect rapture; and you may be sure Dot was likewise; and you may be sure they all were, inclusive of Miss Slowboy, who cried copiously for joy, and, wishing to include her young charge in the general interchange of congratulations, handed round the Baby to everybody in succession, as if it were something to drink.

But now the sound of wheels was heard again outside the door; and somebody exclaimed that Gruff and Tackleton was coming back. Speedily that worthy gentleman appeared: looking warm and flustered.

"Why, what the Devil's this, John Peerybingle!" said Tackleton. "There's some mistake. I appointed Mrs. Tackleton to meet me at the church; and I'll swear I passed her on the road, on her way here. Oh! here she is! I beg your pardon, Sir; I haven't the pleasure of knowing you; but if you can do me the favour to spare this young lady, she has rather a particular engagement this morning."

"But I can't spare her," returned Edward. "I couldn't think of it."

"What do you mean, you vagabond?" said Tackleton.

"I mean, that as I can make allowance for your being vexed," returned the other, with a smile, "I am as deaf to harsh discourse this morning, as I was to all discourse last night."

The look that Tackleton bestowed upon him, and the start he gave!

"I am sorry, Sir," said Edward, holding out May's left hand, and especially the third finger; "that the young lady can't accompany you to church; but as she has been there once, this morning, perhaps you'll excuse her."

Tackleton looked hard at the third finger; and took a little piece of silver paper, apparently containing a ring, from his waistcoat pocket.

"Miss Slowboy," said Tackleton. "Will you have the kindne to throw that in the fire? Thank'ee."

"It was a previous engagement: quite an old engagemen that prevented my wife from keeping her appointment with you, assure you," said Edward.

"Mr. Tackleton will do me the justice to acknowledge that revealed it to him faithfully; and that I told him, many tim I never could forget it," said May, blushing.

"Oh certainly!" said Tackleton. "Oh to be sure. Oh it's right. It's quite correct. Mrs. Edward Plummer, I infer?"

"That's the name," returned the bridegroom.

"Ah, I shouldn't have known you, Sir," said Tackleto scrutinizing his face narrowly, and making a low bow. "I give y joy, Sir!"

"Thank'ee."

"Mrs. Peerybingle," said Tackleton, turning suddenly to wh she stood with her husband; "I am sorry. You haven't done a very great kindness, but, upon my life I am sorry. You better than I thought you. John Peerybingle, I am sorry. Y understand me; that's enough. It's quite correct, ladies a gentlemen all, and perfectly satisfactory. Good morning!"

With these words he carried it off, and carried himself off t merely stopping at the door, to take the flowers and favours fr his horse's head, and to kick that animal once in the ribs, as a me of informing him that there was a screw loose in his arrangemen

Of course it became a serious duty now, to make such a da it, as should mark these events for a high Feast and Festival the Peerybingle Calendar for evermore. Accordingly, Dot w to work to produce such an entertainment, as should ref undying honour on the house and every one concerned; and i very short space of time, she was up to her dimpled elbows flour, and whitening the Carrier's coat, every time he came n her, by stopping him to give him a kiss. That good fell washed the greens, and peeled the turnips, and broke the pla and upset iron pots full of cold water on the fire, and m himself useful in all sorts of ways: while a couple of professio assistants, hastily called in from somewhere in the neighbourho as on a point of life or death, ran against each other in all t doorways and round all the corners; and everybody tumbled o Tilly Slowboy and the Baby, everywhere. Tilly never came in such force before. Her ubiquity was the theme of gene admiration. She was a stumbling-block in the passage at fi and-twenty minutes past two; a man-trap in the kitchen at h past two precisely; and a pitfall in the garret at five-and-twe

utes to three. The Baby's head was, as it were, a test and hstone for every description of matter, animal, vegetable, and eral. Nothing was in use that day that didn't come, at some e or other, into close acquaintance with it.

Then, there was a great Expedition set on foot to go and find Mrs. Fielding; and to be dismally penitent to that excellent lewoman; and to bring her back, by force if needful, to be by and forgiving. And when the Expedition first discovered she would listen to no terms at all, but said, an unspeakable ber of times, that ever she should have lived to see the day! couldn't be got to say anything else, except "Now carry me to grave;" which seemed absurd, on account of her not being dead, nything at all like it. After a time, she lapsed into a state readful calmness, and observed, that when that unfortunate n of circumstances had occurred in the Indigo Trade, she had seen that she would be exposed, during her whole life, to every ies of insult and contumely; and that she was glad to find it the case; and begged they wouldn't trouble themselves about —for what was she? oh, dear! a nobody!—but would forget such a being lived, and would take their course in life without

From this bitterly sarcastic mood, she passed into an angry in which she gave vent to the remarkable expression that the n would turn if trodden on; and after that, she yielded to a regret, and said, if they had only given her their confidence, t might she not have had it in her power to suggest! Taking ntage of this crisis in her feelings, the Expedition embraced and she very soon had her gloves on, and was on her way to n Peerybingle's in a state of unimpeachable gentility; with a r parcel at her side containing a cap of state, almost as tall, quite as stiff, as a mitre.

Then, there were Dot's father and mother to come, in another chaise; and they were behind their time; and fears were rtained; and there was much looking out for them down the ; and Mrs. Fielding always would look in the wrong and lly impossible direction; and being apprised thereof, hoped might take the liberty of looking where she pleased. At last came: a chubby little couple, jogging along in a snug and ortable little way that quite belonged to the Dot family: and and her mother, side by side, were wonderful to see. They so like each other.

hen, Dot's mother had to renew her acquaintance with May's er; and May's mother always stood on her gentility; and s mother never stood on anything but her active little feet. old Dot: so to call Dot's father, I forgot it wasn't his right

name, but never mind: took liberties, and shook hands at firs sight, and seemed to think a cap but so much starch and muslin and didn't defer himself at all to the Indigo Trade, but said ther was no help for it now; and, in Mrs. Fielding's summing up, wa a good-natured kind of man—but coarse, my dear.

I wouldn't have missed Dot, doing the honours in her weddin gown: my benison on her bright face! for any money. No! no the good Carrier, so jovial and so ruddy, at the bottom of th table. Nor the brown, fresh sailor-fellow, and his handsome wif Nor any one among them. To have missed the dinner woul have been to miss as jolly and as stout a meal as man need eat and to have missed the overflowing cups in which they drank Th Wedding-Day, would have been the greatest miss of all.

After dinner, Caleb sang the song about the Sparkling Bowl As I'm a living man: hoping to keep so, for a year or two: h sang it through.

And, by the bye, a most unlooked-for incident occurred, just a he finished the last verse.

There was a tap at the door; and a man came staggering in without saying with your leave, or by your leave, with somethin heavy on his head. Setting this down in the middle of the tabl symmetrically in the centre of the nuts and apples, he said:

"Mr. Tackleton's compliments, and as he hasn't got no use fo the cake himself, p'raps you'll eat it."

And with those words, he walked off.

There was some surprise among the company, as you ma imagine. Mrs. Fielding, being a lady of infinite discernmen suggested that the cake was poisoned, and related a narrative o a cake, which, within her knowledge, had turned a seminary fo young ladies, blue. But she was overruled by acclamation; an the cake was cut by May, with much ceremony and rejoicing.

I don't think any one had tasted it, when there came anothe tap at the door, and the same man appeared again, having unde his arm a vast brown-paper parcel.

"Mr. Tackleton's compliments, and he's sent a few toys fo the Babby. They ain't ugly."

After the delivery of which expressions, he retired again.

The whole party would have experienced great difficulty i finding words for their astonishment, even if they had had amp time to seek them. But they had none at all; for the messeng had scarcely shut the door behind him, when there came anothe tap, and Tackleton himself walked in.

"Mrs. Peerybingle!" said the Toy-merchant, hat in han "I'm sorry. I'm more sorry than I was this morning. I hav

had time to think of it. John Peerybingle! I'm sour by disposition; but I can't help being sweetened, more or less, by coming face to face with such a man as you. Caleb! This unconscious little nurse gave me a broken hint last night, of which I have found the thread. I blush to think how easily I might have bound you and your daughter to me; and what a miserable idiot I was, when I took her for one! Friends, one and all, my house is very lonely to-night. I have not so much as a Cricket on my Hearth. I have scared them all away. Be gracious to me; let me join this happy party!"

He was at home in five minutes. You never saw such a fellow. What *had* he been doing with himself all his life, never to have known, before, his great capacity of being jovial! Or what had the Fairies been doing with him, to have effected such a change!

"John! you won't send me home this evening; will you?" whispered Dot.

He had been very near it though!

There wanted but one living creature to make the party complete; and, in the twinkling of an eye, there he was: very thirsty with hard running, and engaged in hopeless endeavours to squeeze his head into a narrow pitcher. He had gone with the cart to its journey's end, very much disgusted with the absence of his master, and stupendously rebellious to the Deputy. After lingering about the stable for some little time, vainly attempting to incite the old horse to the mutinous act of returning on his own account, he had walked into the tap-room and laid himself down before the fire. But suddenly yielding to the conviction that the Deputy was a humbug, and must be abandoned, he had got up again, turned tail, and come home.

There was a dance in the evening. With which general mention of that recreation, I should have left it alone, if I had not some reason to suppose that it was quite an original dance, and one of a most uncommon figure. It was formed in an odd way; in this way.

Edward, that sailor-fellow—a good free dashing sort of a fellow he was—had been telling them various marvels concerning parrots, and mines, and Mexicans, and gold dust, when all at once he took it in his head to jump up from his seat and propose a dance; for Bertha's harp was there, and she had such a hand upon it as you seldom hear. Dot (sly little piece of affectation when she chose) said her dancing days were over; *I* think because the Carrier was smoking his pipe, and she liked sitting by him, best. Mrs. Fielding had no choice, of course, but to say her dancing days were

over, after that; and everybody said the same, except May; Ma was ready.

So May and Edward get up, amid great applause, to dance alone and Bertha plays her liveliest tune.

Carrier flings his pipe away, takes Dot round the waist, dashes ou into the room, and starts off with her, toe and heel, quite wonder fully. Tackleton no sooner sees this, than he skims across t

Mrs. Fielding, takes her round the waist, and follows suit. Old Dot no sooner sees this, than up he is, all alive, whisks off Mrs. Dot in the middle of the dance, and is the foremost there. Caleb no sooner sees this, than he clutches Tilly Slowboy by both hands and goes off at score; Miss Slowboy, firm in the belief that diving wildly in among the other couples, and effecting any number of concussions with them, is your only principle of footing it.

Hark! how the Cricket joins the music with its Chirp, Chirp, Chirp; and how the Kettle hums!

* * * * * *

But what is this! Even as I listen to them, blithely, and turn towards Dot, for one last glimpse of a little figure very pleasant to see, she and the rest have vanished into air, and I am left alone. The Cricket sings upon the Hearth; a broken child's-toy lies upon the ground; and nothing else remains.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

A Love Story.

D. MACLISE, R.A.
JOHN THOMPSON

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.
A LOVE STORY.

THE BATTLE OF LIFE.

PART THE FIRST.

ONCE upon a time, it matters little when, and in stalwart England, it matters little where, a fierce battle was fought. It was fought upon a long summer day

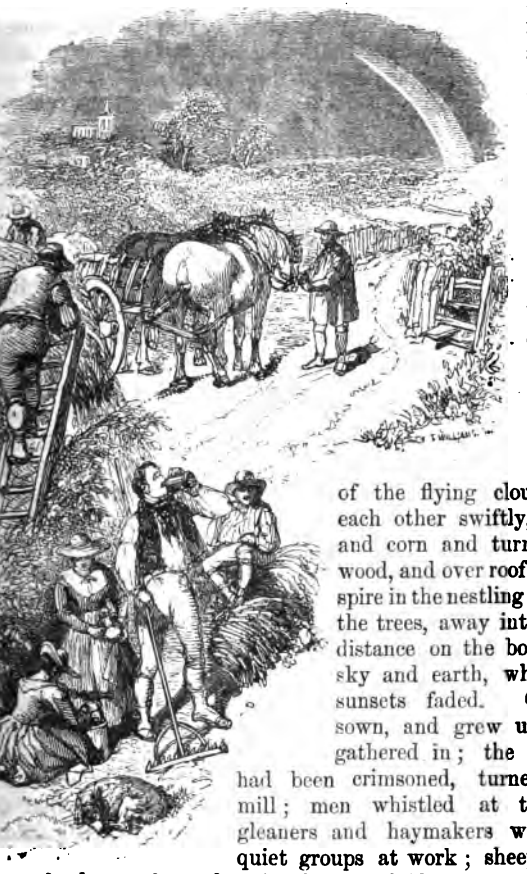
when the waving grass was green. Many a wild flower form by the Almighty Hand to be a perfumed goblet for the de felt its enamelled cup fill high with blood that day, and shrinki dropped. Many an insect deriving its delicate colour fr harmless leaves and herbs, was stained anew that day by dyi men, and marked its frightened way with an unnatural trac

The paint butterfl took bloo into the upon th edges of i wings. Th stream r red. Th trodde ground b came a qua mire, whenc from sulle pools co lected in th prints o human fe and horse hoofs, the on prevailin hue stil lowered and glimmered at the sun.

Heaven keep us from a know ledge of the sights the moon behel upon that field, when, coming u above the black line of distant risin ground, softened and blurred at th edge by trees, she rose into the sk and looked upon the plain, strew with upturned faces that had once mothers' breasts sought mothers' eye or slumbered happily. Heaven kee us from a knowledge of the secre whispered afterwards upon the tainted wind that blew acro the scene of that day's work and that night's death and suffering Many a lonely moon was bright upon the battle-ground, and man a star kept mournful watch upon it, and many a wind from ever

rter of the earth blew over it, before the traces of the fight were rn away.

They lurked and lingered for a long time, but survived in little ngs, for Nature, far above the evil passions of men, soon recovered Her serenity, and smiled upon the guilty battle-ground as she had done before, when it was innocent. The larks sang high above it; the swallows skimmed and dipped and flitted to and fro; the shadows of the flying clouds pursued each other swiftly, over grass and corn and turnip-field and wood, and over roof and church-spire in the nestling town among the trees, away into the bright distance on the borders of the sky and earth, where the red sunsets faded. Crops were sown, and grew up, and were gathered in; the stream that had been crimsoned, turned a water-mill; men whistled at the plough; gleaners and haymakers were seen in quiet groups at work; sheep and oxen tured; boys whooped and called, in fields, to scare away the ds; smoke rose from cottage chimneys; Sabbath bells rang cefully; old people lived and died; the timid creatures of field, and simple flowers of the bush and garden, grew and hered in their destined terms: and all upon the fierce and ody battle-ground, where thousands upon thousands had been ed in the great fight.



But there were deep green patches in the growing corn at first that people looked at awfully. Year after year they re-appeared and it was known that underneath those fertile spots, heaps of men and horses lay buried, indiscriminately, enriching the ground. The husbandmen who ploughed those places, shrank from the great worms abounding there; and the sheaves they yielded, were, for many a long year, called the Battle Sheaves, and set apart; and no one ever knew a Battle Sheaf to be among the last load at the Harvest Home. For a long time, every furrow that was turned revealed some fragments of the fight. For a long time, there were wounded trees upon the battle-ground; and scraps of hacked and broken fence and wall, where deadly struggles had been made, and trampled parts where not a leaf or blade would grow. For a long time, no village-girl would dress her hair or bosom with the sweetest flower from that field of death: and after many a year had come and gone, the berries growing there, were still believed to leave too deep a stain upon the hand that plucked them.

The Seasons in their course, however, though they passed as lightly as the summer clouds themselves, obliterated, in the lapse of time, even these remains of the old conflict; and wore away such legendary traces of it as the neighbouring people carried in their minds, until they dwindled into old wives' tales, dimly remembered round the winter fire, and waning every year. Where the wild flowers and berries had so long remained upon the stem untouched, gardens arose, and houses were built, and children played at battles on the turf. The wounded trees had long ago made Christmas logs, and blazed and roared away. The deep green patches were no greener now than the memory of those who lay in dust below. The ploughshare still turned up from time to time some rusty bits of metal, but it was hard to say what use they had ever served, and those who found them wondered and disputed. An old dinted corslet, and a helmet, had been hanging in the church so long, that the same weak half-blind old man who tried in vain to make them out above the whitewashed arch, had marvelled at them as a baby. If the host slain upon the field, could have been for a moment re-animated in the forms in which they fell, each upon the spot that was the bed of his untimely death, gashed and ghastly soldiers would have stared in, hundreds deep, at household door and window; and would have risen on the hearths of quiet homes; and would have been the garnered store of barns and granaries; and would have started up between the cradled infant and its nurse; and would have floated with the stream, and whirled round on the mill, and crowded the orchard, and burdened the meadow, and piled the rickyard high with dying men. So altered was the

e-ground, where thousands upon thousands had been killed in
reat fight.
owhere more altered, perhaps, about a hundred years ago,
in one little orchard attached to an old stone house with a
ysuckle porch: where, on a bright autumn morning, there
sounds of music and laughter, and where two girls danced
ily together on the grass, while some half-dozen peasant women
ling on ladders, gathering the apples from the trees, stopped
eir work to look down, and share their enjoyment. It was a
ant, lively, natural scene; a beautiful day, a retired spot;
he two girls, quite unconstrained and careless, danced in the
freedom and gaiety of their hearts.
there were no such thing as display in the world, my private
on is, and I hope you agree with me, that we might get on a
deal better than we do, and might be infinitely more agree-
company than we are. It was charming to see how these
danced. They had no spectators but the apple-pickers on the
rs. They were very glad to please them, but they danced to
e themselves (or at least you would have supposed so); and
could no more help admiring, than they could help dancing.
they did dance!
ot like opera-dancers. Not at all. And not like Madame
ody's finished pupils. Not the least. It was not quadrille
ing, nor minuet dancing, nor even country-dance dancing.
as neither in the old style, nor the new style, nor the French
, nor the English style; though it may have been, by accident,
le in the Spanish style, which is a free and joyous one, I am
deriving a delightful air of off-hand inspiration, from the
ing little castanets. As they danced among the orchard trees,
down the groves of stems and back again, and twirled each
lightly round and round, the influence of their airy motion
ed to spread and spread, in the sun-lighted scene, like an ex-
ing circle in the water. Their streaming hair and fluttering
s, the elastic grass beneath their feet, the boughs that rustled
e morning air—the flashing leaves, their speckled shadows on
oft green ground—the balmy wind that swept along the land-
, glad to turn the distant windmill, cheerily—everything
een the two girls, and the man and team at plough upon the
of land, where they showed against the sky as if they were
ast things in the world—seemed dancing too.
t last the younger of the dancing sisters, out of breath, and
ing gaily, threw herself upon a bench to rest. The other
d against a tree hard by. The music, a wandering harp and
e, left off with a flourish, as if it boasted of its freshness;

though, the truth is, it had gone at such a pace, and worked itse to such a pitch of competition with the dancing, that it never cou have held on half a minute longer. The apple-pickers on th ladders raised a hum and murmur of applause, and then, in keepin with the sound, bestirred themselves to work again, like bees.

The more actively, perhaps, because an elderly gentleman, wh was no other than Doctor Jeddler himself—it was Doctor Jeddler house and orchard, you should know, and these were Doct Jeddler's daughters—came bustling out to see what was the matte and who the deuce played music on his property, before breakfas For he was a great philosopher, Doctor Jeddler, and not ve musical.

"Music and dancing *to-day!*" said the Doctor, stopping sho and speaking to himself, "I thought they dreaded to-day. B it's a world of contradictions. Why, Grace; why, Marion!" h added, aloud, "is the world more mad than usual this morning!

"Make some allowance for it, father, if it be," replied h younger daughter, Marion, going close to him, and looking in his face, "for it's somebody's birthday."

"Somebody's birthday, Puss," replied the Doctor. "Don't y know it's always somebody's birthday? Did you never hear ho many new performers enter on this—ha! ha! ha!—it's impossib to speak gravely of it—on this preposterous and ridiculous busine called Life, every minute?"

"No, father!"

"No, not you, of course; you're a woman—almost," said t Doctor. "By the bye," and he looked into the pretty face, st close to his, "I suppose it's *your* birthday."

"No! Do you really, father?" cried his pet daughter, pursi up her red lips to be kissed.

"There! Take my love with it," said the Doctor, imprinti his upon them; "and many happy returns of the—the idea!— the day. The notion of wishing happy returns in such a farce this," said the Doctor to himself, "is good! Ha! ha! ha!"

Doctor Jeddler was, as I have said, a great philosopher; a the heart and mystery of his philosophy was, to look upon t world as a gigantic practical joke: as something too absurd to considered seriously, by any rational man. His system of bel had been, in the beginning, part and parcel of the battle-ground which he lived; as you shall presently understand.

"Well! But how did you get the music?" asked the Doct "Poultry-stealers, of course. Where did the minstrels co from?"

"Alfred sent the music," said his daughter Grace, adjusting

imple flowers in her sister's hair, with which, in her admira-
of that youthful beauty, she had herself adorned it half-an-
before, and which the dancing had disarranged.

Oh! Alfred sent the music, did he?" returned the Doctor.

Yes. He met it coming out of the town as he was entering
The men are travelling on foot, and rested there last night;
as it was Marion's birthday, and he thought it would please
he sent them on, with a pencilled note to me, saying that if I
ght so too, they had come to serenade her."

Ay, ay," said the Doctor, carelessly, "he always takes your
on."

And my opinion being favourable," said Grace, good-
uredly; and pausing for a moment to admire the pretty
she decorated, with her own thrown back; "and Marion
in high spirits, and beginning to dance, I joined her: and
danced to Alfred's music till we were out of breath. And
nought the music all the gayer for being sent by Alfred.
t we, dear Marion?"

Oh, I don't know, Grace. How you tease me about Alfred."

Tease you by mentioning your lover!" said her sister.

I am sure I don't much care to have him mentioned," said
ilful beauty, stripping the petals from some flowers she held,
cattering them on the ground. "I am almost tired of hear-
him; and as to his being my lover——"

Hush! Don't speak lightly of a true heart, which is all your
Marion," cried her sister, "even in jest. There is not a
heart than Alfred's in the world!"

No—no," said Marion, raising her eyebrows with a pleasant
careless consideration, "perhaps not. But I don't know that
s any great merit in that. I—I don't want him to be so
rue. I never asked him. If he expects that I——. But,
Grace, why need we talk of him at all, just now!"

was agreeable to see the graceful figures of the blooming
, twined together, lingering among the trees, conversing
with earnestness opposed to lightness, yet with love respond-
enderly to love. And it was very curious indeed to see the
er sister's eyes suffused with tears; and something fervently
eeply felt, breaking through the wilfulness of what she said,
triving with it painfully.

he difference between them, in respect of age, could not exceed
years at most; but Grace, as often happens in such cases,
no mother watches over both (the Doctor's wife was dead),
d, in her gentle care of her young sister, and in the steadi-
f her devotion to her, older than she was; and more removed,

in course of nature, from all competition with her, or participati otherwise than through her sympathy and true affection, in l wayward fancies, than their ages seemed to warrant. Gr character of mother, that, even in this shadow, and faint reflect of it, purifies the heart, and raises the exalted nature nearer to t angels!

The Doctor's reflections, as he looked after them, and heard t purport of their discourse, were limited, at first, to certain me meditations on the folly of all loves and likings, and the i imposition practised on themselves by young people, who believ for a moment, that there could be anything serious in such bubbl and were always undeceived—always!

But the home-adorning, self-denying qualities of Grace, and l sweet temper, so gentle and retiring, yet including so mu constancy and bravery of spirit, seemed all expressed to him in t contrast between her quiet household figure and that of younger and more beautiful child; and he was sorry for her s —sorry for them both—that life should be such a very ridicul business as it was.

The Doctor never dreamed of inquiring whether his children, either of them, helped in any way to make the scheme a seri one. But then he was a Philosopher.

A kind and generous man by nature, he had stumbled, chance, over that common Philosopher's stone (much more ea discovered than the object of the alchemist's researches), which so times trips up kind and generous men, and has the fatal prope of turning gold to dross, and every precious thing to poor accou

"Britain!" cried the Doctor. "Britain! Halloa!"

A small man, with an uncommonly sour and discontented f emerged from the house, and returned to this call the unceremoni acknowledgment of "Now then!"

"Where's the breakfast table?" said the Doctor.

"In the house," returned Britain.

"Are you going to spread it out here, as you were told night?" said the Doctor. "Don't you know that there gentlemen coming? That there's business to be done t morning, before the coach comes by? That this is a very p ticular occasion?"

"I couldn't do anything, Doctor Jeddler, till the women done getting in the apples, could I?" said Britain, his voice ris with his reasoning, so that it was very loud at last.

"Well, have they done now?" returned the Doctor, looking his watch, and clapping his hands. "Come! make haste! whe Clemency?"

Here am I, Mister," said a voice from one of the ladders, h a pair of clumsy feet descended briskly. "It's all done Clear away, gals. Everything shall be ready for you in a minute, Mister."

Vith that she began to bustle about most vigorously; present- as she did so, an appearance sufficiently peculiar to justify a of introduction.

he was about thirty years old; and had a sufficiently plump cheerful face, though it was twisted up into an odd expression ghtness that made it comical. But the extraordinary homeli- of her gait and manner, would have superseded any face in world. To say that she had two left legs, and somebody arms; and that all four limbs seemed to be out of joint, and art from perfectly wrong places when they were set in motion; offer the mildest outline of the reality. To say that she perfectly content and satisfied with these arrangements, and ded them as being no business of hers, and took her arms egs as they came, and allowed them to dispose of themselves as it happened, is to render faint justice to her equanimity. dress was a prodigious pair of self-willed shoes, that never ed to go where her feet went; blue stockings; a printed of many colours, and the most hideous pattern procurable noney; and a white apron. She always wore short sleeves, always had, by some accident, grazed elbows, in which she so lively an interest that she was continually trying to turn round and get impossible views of them. In general, a little perched somewhere on her head; though it was rarely to be with in the place usually occupied in other subjects, by that e of dress; but from head to foot she was scrupulously clean, maintained a kind of dislocated tidiness. Indeed her laudable ty to be tidy and compact in her own conscience as well as in ublic eye, gave rise to one of her most startling evolutions, was to grasp herself sometimes by a sort of wooden handle of her clothing, and familiarly called a busk), and wrestle as re with her garments, until they fell into a symmetrical gement.

ich, in outward form and garb, was Clemency Newcome; was supposed to have unconsciously originated a corruption r own Christian name, from Clementina (but nobody knew, he deaf old mother, a very phenomenon of age, whom she supported almost from a child, was dead, and she had no relation); who now busied herself in preparing the table; who stood, at intervals, with her bare red arms crossed, rub- her grazed elbows with opposite hands, and staring at it very

composedly, until she suddenly remembered something else wanted and jogged off to fetch it.

"Here are them two lawyers a-coming, Mister!" said Clemen in a tone of no very great good-will.

"Aha!" cried the Doctor, advancing to the gate to meet the "Good morning, good morning! Grace, my dear! Mario Here are Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs. Where's Alfred?"

"He'll be back directly, father, no doubt," said Grace. "I had so much to do this morning in his preparations for departu that he was up and out by daybreak. Good morning, gentlem

"Ladies!" said Mr. Snitchey, "for Self and Craggs," w bowed, "good morning. Miss," to Marion, "I kiss your han Which he did. "And I wish you"—which he might or mig not, for he didn't look, at first sight, like a gentleman troub with many warm outpourings of soul, in behalf of other peop "a hundred happy returns of this auspicious day."

"Ha ha ha!" laughed the Doctor thoughtfully, with his han in his pockets. "The great farce in a hundred acts!"

"You wouldn't, I am sure," said Mr. Snitchey, standing a sm professional blue bag against one leg of the table, "cut the gr farce short for this actress, at all events, Doctor Jeddler."

"No," returned the Doctor. "God forbid! May she live laugh at it, as long as she *can* laugh, and then say, with the Fren wit, 'The farce is ended; draw the curtain.'"

"The French wit," said Mr. Snitchey, peeping sharply into blue bag, "was wrong, Doctor Jeddler; and your philosophy altogether wrong, depend upon it, as I have often told y Nothing serious in life! What do you call law?"

"A joke," replied the Doctor.

"Did you ever go to law?" asked Mr. Snitchey, looking out the blue bag.

"Never," returned the Doctor.

"If you ever do," said Mr. Snitchey, "perhaps you'll alter t opinion."

Craggs, who seemed to be represented by Snitchey, and to conscious of little or no separate existence or personal individuali offered a remark of his own in this place. It involved the o idea of which he did not stand seised and possessed in eq moieties with Snitchey; but he had some partners in it among wise men of the world.

"It's made a great deal too easy," said Mr. Craggs.

"Law is?" asked the Doctor.

"Yes," said Mr. Craggs, "everything is. Everything appe to me to be made too easy, now-a-days. It's the vice of th

nes. If the world is a joke (I am not prepared to say it isn't), ought to be made a very difficult joke to crack. It ought to be hard a struggle, Sir, as possible. That's the intention. But s being made far too easy. We are oiling the gates of life. ey ought to be rusty. We shall have them beginning to turn, on, with a smooth sound. Whereas they ought to grate upon eir hinges, Sir."

Mr. Craggs seemed positively to grate upon his own hinges, as delivered this opinion; to which he communicated immense ect—being a cold, hard, dry man, dressed in grey and white, e a flint; with small twinkles in his eyes, as if something struck rks out of them. The three natural kingdoms, indeed, had each anciful representative among this brotherhood of disputants: for itchey was like a magpie or a raven (only not so sleek), and the ctor had a streaked face like a winter-pippin, with here and there limple to express the peckings of the birds, and a very little bit pigtail behind, that stood for the stalk.

As the active figure of a handsome young man, dressed for a rney, and followed by a porter, bearing several packages and kets, entered the orchard at a brisk pace, and with an air of iety and hope that accorded well with the morning,—these three w together, like the brothers of the sister Fates, or like the aces most effectually disguised, or like the three weird prophets the heath, and greeted him.

"Happy returns, Alf," said the Doctor, lightly.

"A hundred happy returns of this auspicious day, Mr. athfield," said Snitchey, bowing low.

"Returns!" Craggs murmured in a deep voice, all alone.

"Why, what a battery!" exclaimed Alfred, stopping short, nd one—two—three—all foreboders of no good, in the great sea fore me. I am glad you are not the first I have met this rning: I should have taken it for a bad omen. But Grace was e first—sweet, pleasant Grace—so I defy you all!"

"If you please, Mister, *I* was the first you know," said emency Newcome. "She was a walking out here, before arise, you remember. I was in the house."

"That's true! Clemency was the first," said Alfred. "So I fy you with Clemency."

"Ha, ha, ha!—for Self and Craggs," said Snitchey. "What defiance!"

"Not so bad a one as it appears, maybe," said Alfred, shaking nds heartily with the Doctor, and also with Snitchey and Craggs, d then looking round. "Where are the—Good Heavens!"

With a start, productive for the moment of a closer partnership

between Jonathan Snitchey and Thomas Craggs than the subsisti articles of agreement in that wise contemplated, he hastily beto himself to where the sisters stood together, and—however, needn't more particularly explain his manner of saluting Mari first, and Grace afterwards, than by hinting that Mr. Craggs m possibly have considered it "too easy."

Perhaps to change the subject, Doctor Jeddler made a ha move towards the breakfast, and they all sat down at table. Gr presided; but so discreetly stationed herself, as to cut off her sis and Alfred from the rest of the company. Snitchey and Crag sat at opposite corners, with the blue bag between them for safet and the Doctor took his usual position, opposite to Grace. Clemen hovered galvanically about the table, as waitress; and t melancholy Britain, at another and a smaller board, acted as Gra Carver of a round of beef, and a ham.

"Meat?" said Britain, approaching Mr. Snitchey, with t carving knife and fork in his hands, and throwing the question him like a missile.

"Certainly," returned the lawyer.

"Do *you* want any?" to Craggs.

"Lean, and well done," replied that gentleman.

Having executed these orders, and moderately supplied t Doctor (he seemed to know that nobody else wanted anything eat), he lingered as near the Firm as he decently could, watchi with an austere eye, their disposition of the viands, and but o relaxing the severe expression of his face. This was on the occasi of Mr. Craggs, whose teeth were not of the best, partially choki when he cried out with great animation, "I thought he was gone

"Now Alfred," said the Doctor, "for a word or two of busine while we are yet at breakfast."

"While we are yet at breakfast," said Snitchey and Crag who seemed to have no present idea of leaving off.

Although Alfred had not been breakfasting, and seemed to ha quite enough business on his hands as it was, he respectfu answered:

"If you please, Sir."

"If anything could be serious," the Doctor began, "in su a——"

"Farce as this, Sir," hinted Alfred.

"In such a farce as this," observed the Doctor, "it might this recurrence, on the eve of separation, of a double birthd which is connected with many associations pleasant to us four, a with the recollection of a long and amicable intercourse. Tha not to the purpose."

Ah! yes, yes, Doctor Jeddler," said the young man. "It is purpose. Much to the purpose, as my heart bears witness

morning; and as yours does too, I know, if you would let it I leave your house to-day; I cease to be your ward to-day; art with tender relations stretching far behind us, that never

can be exactly renewed, and with others dawning yet before u
he looked down at Marion beside him, "fraught with su
considerations as I must not trust myself to speak of now. Co
come!" he added, rallying his spirits and the Doctor at on
"there's a serious grain in this large foolish dust-heap, Doc
Let us allow to-day, that there is One."

"To-day!" cried the Doctor. "Hear him! Ha, ha, ha!
all days in the foolish year. Why on this day, the great ba
was fought on this ground. On this ground where we now
where I saw my two girls dance this morning, where the fruit
just been gathered for our eating from these trees, the roots
which are struck in Men, not earth,—so many lives were lost, t
within my recollection, generations afterwards, a churchyard
of bones, and dust of bones, and chips of cloven skulls, has b
dug up from underneath our feet here. Yet not a hundred peo
in that battle knew for what they fought, or why; not a hund
of the inconsiderate rejoicers in the victory, why they rejoi
Not half a hundred people were the better for the gain or l
Not half-a-dozen men agree to this hour on the cause or mer
and nobody, in short, ever knew anything distinct about it, but
mourners of the slain. Serious, too!" said the Doctor, laughi
"Such a system!"

"But all this seems to me," said Alfred, "to be v
serious."

"Serious!" cried the Doctor. "If you allowed such things
be serious, you must go mad, or die, or climb up to the top o
mountain, and turn hermit."

"Besides—so long ago," said Alfred.

"Long ago!" returned the Doctor. "Do you know what
world has been doing, ever since? Do you know what else it
been doing? *I* don't!"

"It has gone to law a little," observed Mr. Snitchey, stir
his tea.

"Although the way out has been always made too easy,"
his partner.

"And you'll excuse my saying, Doctor," pursued Mr. Snitch
"having been already put a thousand times in possession of
opinion, in the course of our discussions, that, in its having gon
law, and in its legal system altogether, I do observe a serious
—now, really, a something tangible, and with a purpose
intention in it——"

Clemency Newcome made an angular tumble against the ta
occasioning a sounding clatter among the cups and saucers.

"Heyday! what's the matter there?" exclaimed the Docto

It's this evil-inclined blue bag," said Clemency, "always
ing up somebody!"

With a purpose and intention in it, I was saying," resumed
hey, "that commands respect. Life a farce, Doctor Jeddler?
law in it?"

ne Doctor laughed, and looked at Alfred.

Granted, if you please, that war is foolish," said Snitchey.
ere we agree. For example. Here's a smiling country,"
ing it out with his fork, "once overrun by soldiers—trespassers
man of 'em—and laid waste by fire and sword. He, he, he!
idea of any man exposing himself, voluntarily, to fire and
l! Stupid, wasteful, positively ridiculous; you laugh at your
y-creatures, you know, when you think of it! But take this
ng country as it stands. Think of the laws appertaining to
roperty; to the bequest and devise of real property; to the
gage and redemption of real property; to leasehold, freehold,
copyhold estate; think," said Mr. Snitchey, with such great
on that he actually smacked his lips, "of the complicated laws
ng to title and proof of title, with all the contradictory
dents and numerous Acts of Parliament connected with them;
of the infinite number of ingenious and interminable Chancery
to which this pleasant prospect may give rise;—and
wledge, Doctor Jeddler, that there is a green spot in the
ne about us! I believe," said Mr. Snitchey, looking at his
er, "that I speak for Self and Craggs?"

r. Craggs having signified assent, Mr. Snitchey, somewhat
ned by his recent eloquence, observed that he would take a
more beef, and another cup of tea.

I don't stand up for life in general," he added, rubbing his
and chuckling, "it's full of folly; full of something worse.
ssions of trust, and confidence, and unselfishness, and all that.
bah, bah! We see what they're worth. But you mustn't
at life; you've got a game to play; a very serious game
l! Everybody's playing against you, you know; and you're
g against them. Oh! it's a very interesting thing. There
eep moves upon the board. You must only laugh, Doctor
er, when you win; and then not much. He, he, he! And
not much," repeated Snitchey, rolling his head and winking
e; as if he would have added, "you may do this instead!"

Well, Alfred!" cried the Doctor, "what do you say now?"

say, Sir," replied Alfred, "that the greatest favour you
do me, and yourself too I am inclined to think, would be to
metimes to forget this battle-field, and others like it, in that
er battle-field of Life, on which the sun looks every day."

"Really, I'm afraid that wouldn't soften his opinions, M Alfred," said Snitchey. "The combatants are very eager and ve bitter in that same battle of Life. There's a great deal of cutti and slashing, and firing into people's heads from behind; terrib treading down, and trampling on; it's rather a bad business."

"I believe, Mr. Snitchey," said Alfred, "there are quiet vi tories and struggles, great sacrifices of self, and noble acts heroism, in it—even in many of its apparent lightnesses and co tradictions—not the less difficult to achieve, because they have earthly chronicle or audience; done every day in nooks and corne and in little households, and in men's and women's hearts—a one of which might reconcile the sternest man to such a world, a fill him with belief and hope in it, though two-fourths of its peo were at war, and another fourth at law; and that's a bold word

Both the sisters listened keenly.

"Well, well!" said the Doctor, "I am too old to be converte even by my friend Snitchey here, or my good spinster siste Martha Jeddler; who had what she calls her domestic trials ag ago, and has led a sympathising life with all sorts of people ev since; and who is so much of your opinion (only she's less reaso able and more obstinate, being a woman), that we can't agree, a seldom meet. I was born upon this battle-field. I began, as boy, to have my thoughts directed to the real history of a batt field. Sixty years have gone over my head; and I have nev seen the Christian world, including Heaven knows how ma loving mothers and good enough girls, like mine here, anythi but mad for a battle-field. The same contradictions prevail everything. One must either laugh or cry at such stupendo inconsistencies; and I prefer to laugh."

Britain, who had been paying the profoundest and mo melancholy attention to each speaker in his turn, seemed sudden to decide in favour of the same preference, if a deep sepulchr sound that escaped him might be construed into a demonstrati of risibility. His face, however, was so perfectly unaffected by both before and afterwards, that although one or two of t breakfast party looked round as being startled by a mysterio noise, nobody connected the offender with it.

Except his partner in attendance, Clemency Newcome; wh rousing him with one of those favourite joints, her elbows, inquire in a reproachful whisper, what he laughed at.

"Not you!" said Britain.

"Who then?"

"Humanity," said Britain. "That's the joke."

"What between master and them lawyers, he's getting mo

nore addle-headed every day!" cried Clemency, giving him a with the other elbow, as a mental stimulant. "Do you where you are? Do you want to get warning?"

I don't know anything," said Britain, with a leaden eye and an ovable visage. "I don't care for anything. I don't make out ning. I don't believe anything. And I don't want anything."

lthough this forlorn summary of his general condition may been overcharged in an access of despondency, Benjamin in—sometimes called Little Britain, to distinguish him from t; as we might say Young England, to express Old England a difference—had defined his real state more accurately than t be supposed. For serving as a sort of man Miles to the or's Friar Bacon; and listening day after day to innumerable ons addressed by the Doctor to various people, all tending to that his very existence was at best a mistake and an rdity, this unfortunate servitor had fallen, by degrees, into an abyss of confused and contradictory suggestions from within without, that Truth at the bottom of her well, was on the surface as compared with Britain in the depths of his ification. The only point he clearly comprehended, was, that new element usually brought into these discussions by hey and Craggs, never served to make them clearer, and ys seemed to give the Doctor a species of advantage and rmation. Therefore he looked upon the Firm as one of the mate causes of his state of mind, and held them in abhorrence dingly.

But this is not our business, Alfred," said the Doctor. asing to be my ward (as you have said) to-day; and leaving us to the brim of such learning as the Grammar School down was able to give you, and your studies in London could add to and such practical knowledge as a dull old country Doctor myself could graft upon both; you are away, now, into the l. The first term of probation appointed by your poor father, over, away you go now, your own master, to fulfil his second e: and long before your three years' tour among the foreign ls of medicine is finished, you'll have forgotten us. Lord, l forget us easily in six months!"

If I do—But you know better; why should I speak to you!" Alfred, laughing.

I don't know anything of the sort," returned the Doctor. at do you say, Marion?"

arion, trifling with her teacup seemed to say—but she didn't —that he was welcome to forget them, if he could. Grace ed the blooming face against her cheek, and smiled.

"I haven't been, I hope, a very unjust steward in the exec of my trust," pursued the Doctor; "but I am to be, at any formally discharged, and released, and what not, this morning here are our good friends Snitchey and Craggs, with a bag papers, and accounts, and documents, for the transfer of balance of the trust fund to you (I wish it was a more dif one to dispose of, Alfred, but you must get to be a great ma make it so), and other drolleries of that sort, which are signed, sealed, and delivered."

"And duly witnessed, as by law required," said Snit pushing away his plate, and taking out the papers, whic partner proceeded to spread upon the table; "and Self and C having been co-trustees with you, Doctor, in so far as the fun concerned, we shall want your two servants to attest the signa —can you read, Mrs. Newcome?"

"I an't married, Mister," said Clemency.

"Oh, I beg your pardon. I should think not," chu Snitchey, casting his eyes over her extraordinary figure. *can* read?"

"A little," answered Clemency.

"The marriage service, night and morning, eh?" observe lawyer, jocosely.

"No," said Clemency. "Too hard. I only reads a thim

"Read a thimble!" echoed Snitchey. "What are you ta about, young woman?"

Clemency nodded. "And a nutmeg-grater."

"Why, this is a lunatic! a subject for the Lord Chancellor!" said Snitchey, staring at her.

"If possessed of any property," stipulated Craggs.

Grace, however, interposing, explained that each of the a in question bore an engraved motto, and so formed the library of Clemency Newcome, who was not much given t study of books.

"Oh, that's it, is it, Miss Grace!" said Snitchey.

"Yes, yes. Ha, ha, ha! I thought our friend was an She looks uncommonly like it," he muttered, with a super glance. "And what does the thimble say, Mrs. Newcome?

"I an't married, Mister," observed Clemency.

"Well, Newcome. Will that do?" said the lawyer. " does the thimble say, Newcome?"

How Clemency, before replying to this question, hel pocket open, and looked down into its yawning depths f thimble which wasn't there,—and how she then held an op pocket open, and seeming to descry it, like a pearl of great

t the bottom, cleared away such intervening obstacles as a andkerchief, an end of wax candle, a flushed apple, an orange, a ucky penny, a cramp bone, a padlock, a pair of scissors in a heath, more expressively describable as promising young shears, a andful or so of loose beads, several balls of cotton, a needle-case, cabinet collection of curl-papers, and a biscuit, all of which rticles she entrusted individually and severally to Britain to hold, —is of no consequence. Nor how, in her determination to grasp his pocket by the throat and keep it prisoner (for it had a ndency to swing and twist itself round the nearest corner), she ssumed, and calmly maintained, an attitude apparently incon-istent with the human anatomy and the laws of gravity. It is nough that at last she triumphantly produced the thimble on er finger, and rattled the nutmeg-grater; the literature of both hose trinkets being obviously in course of wearing out and wasting way, through excessive friction.

"That's the thimble, is it, young woman?" said Mr. Snitchey, iverting himself at her expense. "And what does the thimble ay?"

"It says," replied Clemency, reading slowly round it as if it ere a tower, "For-get and For-give."

Snitchey and Craggs laughed heartily. "So new!" said nitchey. "So easy!" said Craggs. "Such a knowledge of uman nature in it," said Snitchey. "So applicable to the affairs f life," said Craggs.

"And the nutmeg-grater?" inquired the head of the Firm.

"The grater says," returned Clemency, "Do as you—wold—e—done by."

"'Do, or you'll be done brown, you mean,'" said Mr. nitchey.

"I don't understand," retorted Clemency, shaking her head aguely. "I an't no lawyer."

"I am afraid that if she was, Doctor," said Mr. Snitchey, rning to him suddenly, as if to anticipate any effect that might herwise be consequent on this retort, "she'd find it to be the lden rule of half her clients. They are serious enough in that —whimsical as your world is—and lay the blame on us afterwards. e, in our profession, are little else than mirrors after all, Mr. lfred; but we are generally consulted by angry and quarrelsome eople, who are not in their best looks; and it's rather hard to arrel with us if we reflect unpleasant aspects. I think," said r. Snitchey, "that I speak for Self and Craggs?"

"Decidedly," said Craggs.

"And so, if Mr. Britain will oblige us with a mouthful of ink,"

said Mr. Snitchey, returning to the papers, "we'll sign, seal, and deliver as soon as possible, or the coach will be coming past before we know where we are."

If one might judge from his appearance, there was every probability of the coach coming past before Mr. Britain knew where *he* was; for he stood in a state of abstraction, mentally balancing the Doctor against the lawyers, and the lawyers against the Doctor, and their clients against both; and engaged in feeble attempts to make the thimble and nutmeg-grater (a new idea to him) square with anybody's system of philosophy; and, in short, bewildering himself as much as ever his great namesake has done with theories and schools. But Clemency, who was his good Genius—though he had the meanest possible opinion of her understanding, by reason of her seldom troubling herself with abstract speculations, and being always at hand to do the right thing at the right time—having produced the ink in a twinkling, tendered him the further service of recalling him to himself by the application of her elbows; with which gentle flappers she so jogged his memory, in a more literal construction of that phrase than usual, that he soon became quite fresh and brisk.

How he laboured under an apprehension not uncommon to persons in his degree, to whom the use of pen and ink is an event, that he couldn't append his name to a document, not of his own writing, without committing himself in some shadowy manner, of somehow signing away vague and enormous sums of money; and how he approached the deeds under protest, and by dint of the Doctor's coercion, and insisted on pausing to look at them before writing (the cramped hand, to say nothing of the phraseology, being so much Chinese to him), and also on turning them round to see whether there was anything fraudulent, underneath; and how, having signed his name, he became desolate as one who had parted with his property and rights; I want the time to tell. Also, how the blue bag containing his signature, afterwards had a mysterious interest for him, and he couldn't leave it; also, how Clemency Newcome, in an ecstasy of laughter at the idea of her own importance and dignity, brooded over the whole table with her two elbows like a spread eagle, and reposed her head upon her left arm as a preliminary to the formation of certain cabalistic characters, which required a deal of ink, and imaginary counterparts whereof she executed at the same time with her tongue. Also, how, having once tasted ink, she became thirsty in that regard, as tigers are said to be after tasting another sort of fluid, and wanted to sign everything, and put her name in all kinds of places. In brief, the Doctor was discharged of his trust and all

its responsibilities; and Alfred, taking it on himself, was fairly started on the journey of life.

"Britain!" said the Doctor. "Run to the gate, and watch for the coach. Time flies, Alfred!"

"Yes, Sir, yes," returned the young man, hurriedly. "Dear Grace! a moment! Marion—so young and beautiful, so winning and so much admired, dear to my heart as nothing else in life is—remember! I leave Marion to you!"

"She has always been a sacred charge to me, Alfred. She is doubly so now. I will be faithful to my trust, believe me."

"I do believe it, Grace. I know it well. Who could look upon your face, and hear your earnest voice, and not know it! Ah, good Grace! If I had your well-governed heart, and tranquil mind, how bravely I would leave this place to-day!"

"Would you?" she answered, with a quiet smile.

"And yet, Grace—Sister, seems the natural word."

"Use it!" she said quickly. "I am glad to hear it, call me nothing else."

"And yet, Sister, then," said Alfred, "Marion and I had better have your true and steadfast qualities serving us here, and making us both happier and better. I wouldn't carry them away, to sustain myself, if I could!"

"Coach upon the hill-top!" exclaimed Britain.

"Time flies, Alfred," said the Doctor.

Marion had stood apart, with her eyes fixed upon the ground; but this warning being given, her young lover brought her tenderly to where her sister stood, and gave her into her embrace.

"I have been telling Grace, dear Marion," he said, "that you are her charge; my precious trust at parting. And when I come back and reclaim you, dearest, and the bright prospect of our married life lies stretched before us, it shall be one of our chief pleasures to consult how we can make Grace happy; how we can anticipate her wishes; how we can show our gratitude and love to her; how we can return her something of the debt she will have heaped upon us."

The younger sister had one hand in his; the other rested on her sister's neck. She looked into that sister's eyes, so calm, serene, and cheerful, with a gaze in which affection, admiration, sorrow, wonder, almost veneration were blended. She looked into that sister's face, as if it were the face of some bright angel. Calm, serene, and cheerful, it looked back on her and on her lover.

"And when the time comes, as it must one day," said Alfred, "I wonder it has never come yet: but Grace knows best, for

Grace is always right,—when *she* will want a friend to open he whole heart to, and to be to her something of what she has bee to us,—then, Marion, how faithful we will prove, and what delig to us to know that she, our dear good sister, loves and is love again, as we would have her!"

Still the younger sister looked into her eyes, and turned not even towards him. And still those honest eyes looked back, s calm, serene, and cheerful, on herself and on her lover.

"And when all that is past, and we are old, and living (as w must!) together—close together; talking often of old times," sai Alfred—"these shall be our favourite times among them—th day most of all; and telling each other what we thought and fel and hoped and feared, at parting; and how we couldn't bear t say good bye——"

"Coach coming through the wood," cried Britain.

"Yes! I am ready—and how we met again, so happily, spite of all; we'll make this day the happiest in all the year, an keep it as a treble birthday. Shall we, dear?"

"Yes!" interposed the elder sister, eagerly, and with a radian smile. "Yes! Alfred, don't linger. There's no time. Sa good bye to Marion. And Heaven be with you!"

He pressed the younger sister to his heart. Released fro his embrace, she again clung to her sister; and her eyes, wi the same blended look, again sought those so calm, serene, an cheerful.

"Farewell my boy!" said the Doctor. "To talk about an serious correspondence or serious affections, and engagements an so forth, in such a—ha ha ha!—you know what I mean—wh that, of course, would be sheer nonsense. All I can say is, that you and Marion should continue in the same foolish minds, I sha not object to have you for a son-in-law one of these days."

"Over the bridge!" cried Britain.

"Let it come!" said Alfred, wringing the Doctor's hand stoutl "Think of me sometimes, my old friend and guardian, as serious as you can! Adieu, Mr. Snitchey! Farewell, Mr. Craggs!"

"Coming down the road!" cried Britain.

"A kiss of Clemency Newcome for long acquaintance' sake shake hands, Britain—Marion, dearest heart, good-bye! Sist Grace! remember!"

The quiet household figure, and the face so beautiful in serenity, were turned towards him in reply; but Marion's lo and attitude remained unchanged.

The coach was at the gate. There was a bustle with luggage. The coach drove away. Marion never moved.

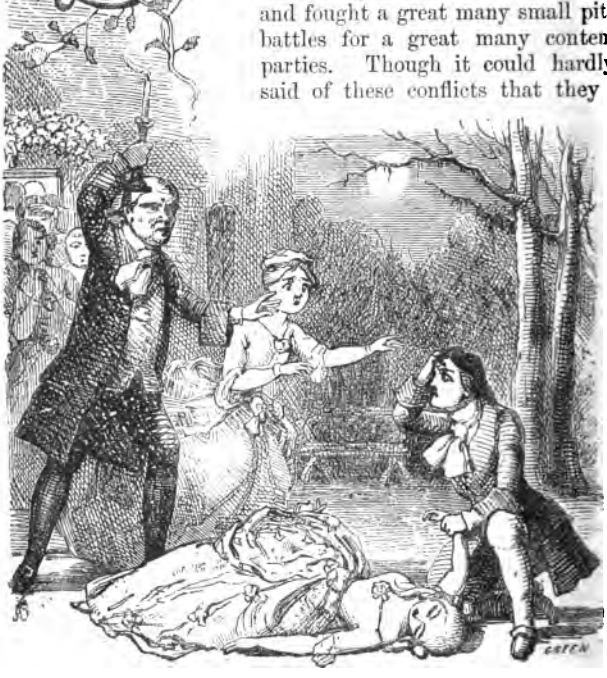
"He waves his hat to you, my love," said Grace. "Your chosen husband, darling. Look!"

The younger sister raised her head, and, for a moment, turned it. Then turning back again, and fully meeting, for the first time, those calm eyes, fell sobbing on her neck.

"Oh, Grace. God bless you! But I cannot bear to see it, Grace! It breaks my heart."

PART THE SECOND.

NITCHEY AND CRAGGS had a snug little office on the old battle-ground, where they drove a snug little business, and fought a great many small pitched battles for a great many contending parties. Though it could hardly be said of these conflicts that they were



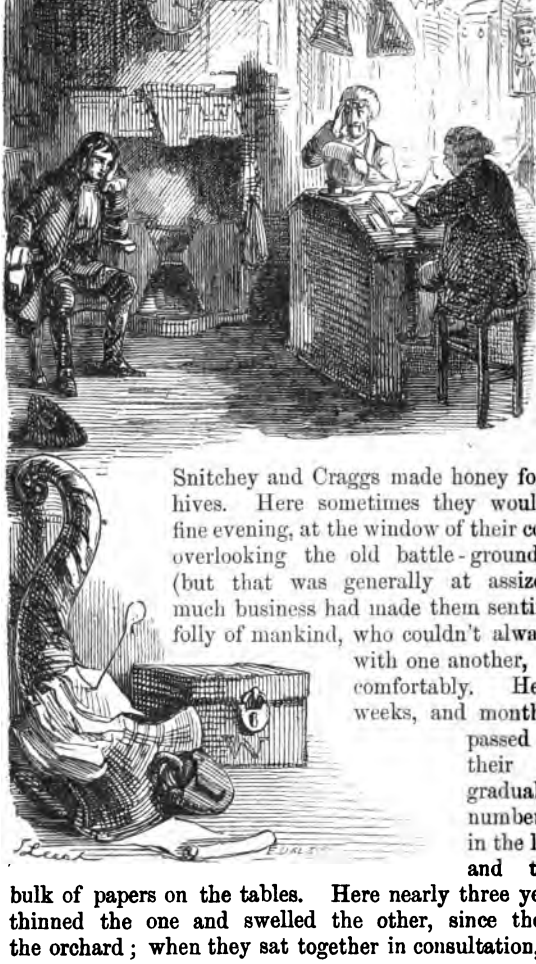
running fights—for in truth they generally proceeded at a snail's pace—the part the Firm had in them came so far within that general denomination, that now they took a shot at this

Plaintiff, and now aimed a chop at that Defendant, now made a heavy charge at an estate in Chancery, and now had some light skirmishing among an irregular body of small debtors, just as the occasion served, and the enemy happened to present himself. The Gazette was an important and profitable feature in some of their fields, as well as in fields of greater renown; and in most of the Actions wherein they shewed their generalship, it was afterwards observed by the combatants that they had had great difficulty in making each other out, or in knowing with any degree of distinctness what they were about, in consequence of the vast amount of smoke by which they were surrounded.

The offices of Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs stood convenient with an open door, down two smooth steps in the market-place; so that any angry farmer inclining towards hot water, might tumble into it at once. Their special council-chamber and hall of conference was an old back room up stairs, with a low dark ceiling, which seemed to be knitting its brows gloomily in the consideration of tangled points of law. It was furnished with some high-backed leathern chairs, garnished with great goggle-eyed brass nails, of which, every here and there, two or three had fallen out; or had been picked out, perhaps, by the wandering thumbs and forefingers of bewildered clients. There was a framed print of a great judge in it, every curl in whose dreadful wig had made a man's hair stand on end. Bales of papers filled the dusty closets, shelves, and tables; and round the wainscot there were piers of boxes, padlocked and fireproof, with people's names painted outside, which anxious visitors felt themselves, by a cruel enchantment, obliged to spell backwards and forwards, and to make anagrams of, while they sat, seeming to listen to Snitchey and Craggs, without comprehending one word of what they said.

Snitchey and Craggs had each, in private life as in professional existence, a partner of his own. Snitchey and Craggs were the best friends in the world, and had a real confidence in one another; but Mrs. Snitchey, by a dispensation not uncommon in the affairs of life, was, on principle, suspicious of Mr. Craggs; and Mrs. Craggs was, on principle, suspicious of Mr. Snitchey. "Your Snitcheys indeed," the latter lady would observe, sometimes, to Mr. Craggs; using that imaginative plural as if in disparagement of an objectionable pair of pantaloons, or other articles not possessed of a singular number; "I don't see what you want with your Snitcheys, for my part. You trust a great deal too much to your Snitcheys, *I* think, and I hope you may never find my words come true." While Mrs. Snitchey would observe to Mr. Snitchey, of Craggs, "that if ever he was led

away by man he was led away by that man; and that ever she read a double purpose in a mortal eye, she read t purpose in Craggs's eye." Notwithstanding this, however, t were all very good friends in general: and Mrs. Snitchey and M



Snitchey and Craggs made honey for their sev hives. Here sometimes they would linger, c fine evening, at the window of their council-cham overlooking the old battle-ground, and wo (but that was generally at assize time, w much business had made them sentimental) at folly of mankind, who couldn't always be at p with one another, and go to comfortably. Here days, weeks, and months, and ye passed over the their calendar, gradually diminish number of brass n in the leathern cha and the increas bulk of papers on the tables. Here nearly three years' flight thinned the one and swelled the other, since the breakfast the orchard; when they sat together in consultation, at night.

Not alone; but with a man of thirty, or about that time of life, ligently dressed, and somewhat haggard in the face, but well-ade, well-attired, and well-looking, who sat in the arm-chair of ate, with one hand in his breast, and the other in his dishevelled ir, pondering moodily. Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs sat opposite ch other at a neighbouring desk. One of the fire-proof boxes, padlocked and opened, was upon it; a part of its contents lay rewn upon the table, and the rest was then in course of passing rough the hands of Mr. Snitchey, who brought it to the candle, cument by document, looked at every paper singly, as he produced shook his head, and handed it to Mr. Craggs, who looked it over so, shook his head, and laid it down. Sometimes they would stop, d shaking their heads in concert, looked towards the abstracted ient; and the name on the box being Michael Warden, Esquire, e may conclude from these premises that the name and the box ere both his, and that the affairs of Michael Warden, Esquire, ere in a bad way.

"That's all," said Mr. Snitchey, turning up the last paper. Really there's no other resource. No other resource."

"All lost, spent, wasted, pawned, borrowed, and sold, eh?" id the client, looking up.

"All," returned Mr. Snitchey.

"Nothing else to be done, you say?"

"Nothing at all."

The client bit his nails, and pondered again.

"And I am not even personally safe in England? You hold that; do you?"

"In no part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and eland," replied Mr. Snitchey.

"A mere prodigal son with no father to go back to, no swine keep, and no husks to share with them? Eh?" pursued the ient, rocking one leg over the other, and searching the ground ith his eyes.

Mr. Snitchey coughed, as if to deprecate the being supposed to rticipate in any figurative illustration of a legal position. Mr. raggs, as if to express that it was a partnership view of the bject, also coughed.

"Ruined at thirty!" said the client. "Humph!"

"Not ruined, Mr. Warden," returned Snitchey. "Not so bad that. You have done a good deal towards it, I must say, but ou are not ruined. A little nursing——"

"A little Devil," said the client.

"Mr. Craggs," said Snitchey, "will you oblige me with a pinch snuff? Thank you, Sir."

As the imperturbable lawyer applied it to his nose, with great apparent relish and a perfect absorption of his attention in the proceeding, the client gradually broke into a smile, and, looking up, said:

"You talk of nursing. How long nursing?"

"How long nursing?" repeated Snitchey, dusting the snuff from his fingers, and making a slow calculation in his mind. "For your involved estate, Sir? In good hands? S. and C.'s, say? Six or seven years."

"To starve for six or seven years!" said the client with a fretful laugh, and an impatient change of his position.

"To starve for six or seven years, Mr. Warden," said Snitchey, "would be very uncommon indeed. You might get another estate by shewing yourself, the while. But we don't think you could do it—speaking for Self and Craggs—and consequently don't advise it."

"What *do* you advise?"

"Nursing, I say," repeated Snitchey. "Some few years of nursing by Self and Craggs would bring it round. But to enable us to make terms, and hold terms, and you to keep terms, you must go away, you must live abroad. As to starvation, we could ensure you some hundreds a year to starve upon, even in the beginning, I dare say, Mr. Warden."

"Hundreds," said the client. "And I have spent thousands!"

"That," retorted Mr. Snitchey, putting the papers slowly back into the cast-iron box, "there is no doubt about. No doubt a—bout," he repeated to himself, as he thoughtfully pursued his occupation.

The lawyer very likely knew his man; at any rate his dry, shrewd, whimsical manner, had a favourable influence upon the client's moody state, and disposed him to be more free and unreserved. Or perhaps the client knew *his* man, and had elicited such encouragement as he had received, to render some purpose he was about to disclose the more defensible in appearance. Gradually raising his head, he sat looking at his immovable adviser with a smile, which presently broke into a laugh.

"After all," he said, "my iron-headed friend——"

Mr. Snitchey pointed out his partner. "Self and—excuse me—Craggs."

"I beg Mr. Craggs's pardon," said the client. "After all, my iron-headed friends," he leaned forward in his chair, and dropped his voice a little, "you don't know half my ruin yet."

Mr. Snitchey stopped and stared at him. Mr. Craggs also stared.

"I am not only deep in debt," said the client, "but I am deep in—"

Not in love!" cried Snitchey.
Yes!" said the client, falling back in his chair, and surveying irm with his hands in his pockets. "Deep in love."
And not with an heiress, Sir?" said Snitchey.
Not with an heiress."
Nor a rich lady?"
Nor a rich lady that I know of—except in beauty and merit."
A single lady, I trust?" said Mr. Snitchey, with great expression.
Certainly."
It's not one of Doctor Jeddler's daughters?" said Snitchey, nly squaring his elbows on his knees, and advancing his t least a yard.
Yes!" returned the client.
Not his younger daughter?" said Snitchey.
Yes?" returned the client.
Mr. Craggs," said Snitchey, much relieved, "will you oblige ith another pinch of snuff? Thank you. I am happy to say n't signify, Mr. Warden; she's engaged, Sir, she's bespoke. artner can corroborate me. We know the fact."
We know the fact," repeated Craggs.
Why, so do I perhaps," returned the client quietly. "What at! Are you men of the world, and did you never hear of a an changing her mind?"
There certainly have been actions for breach," said Mr. hey, "brought against both spinsters and widows, but, in the rity of cases——"
Cases!" interposed the client, impatiently. "Don't talk to f cases. The general precedent is in a much larger volume any of your law books. Besides, do you think I have lived eeks in the Doctor's house for nothing?"
I think, Sir," observed Mr. Snitchey, gravely addressing elf to his partner, "that of all the scrapes Mr. Warden's s have brought him into at one time and another—and they been pretty numerous, and pretty expensive, as none know r than himself and you and I—the worst scrape may turn out , if he talks in this way, his having been ever left by one of at the Doctor's garden wall, with three broken ribs, a ed collar-bone, and the Lord knows how many bruises. We t think so much of it, at the time when we knew he was ; on well under the Doctor's hands and roof; but it looks bad Sir. Bad! It looks very bad. Doctor Jeddler too—our t, Mr. Craggs."
Mr. Alfred Heathfield too—a sort of client, Mr. Snitchey, Craggs.

"Mr. Michael Warden too, a kind of client," said the careless visitor, "and no bad one either; having played the fool for ten or twelve years. However Mr. Michael Warden has sown his wild oats now—there's their crop, in that box; and he means to repent and be wise. And in proof of it, Mr. Michael Warden means, if he can, to marry Marion, the Doctor's lovely daughter, and to carry her away with him."

"Really, Mr. Craggs," Snitchey began.

"Really Mr. Snitchey, and Mr. Craggs, partners both," said the client, interrupting him; "you know your duty to your client and you know well enough, I am sure, that it is no part of it to interfere in a mere love affair, which I am obliged to confide to you. I am not going to carry the young lady off, without her own consent. There's nothing illegal in it. I never was Mr. Heathfield's bosom friend. I violate no confidence of his. I love where he loves, and I mean to win where he would win, if I can."

"He can't, Mr. Craggs," said Snitchey, evidently anxious and discomfited. "He can't do it, Sir. She dotes on Mr. Alfred."

"Does she?" returned the client.

"Mr. Craggs, she dotes on him, Sir," persisted Snitchey.

"I didn't live six weeks, some few months ago, in the Doctor's house for nothing; and I doubted that soon," observed the client. "She would have doted on him, if her sister could have brought it about; but I watched them. Marion avoided his name, avoided the subject: shrank from the least allusion to it, with evident distress."

"Why should she, Mr. Craggs, you know? Why should she, Sir?" inquired Snitchey.

"I don't know why she should, though there are many likely reasons," said the client, smiling at the attention and perplexity expressed in Mr. Snitchey's shining eye, and at his cautious way of carrying on the conversation, and making himself informed upon the subject; "but I know she does. She was very young when she made the engagement—if it may be called one, I am not even sure of that—and has repented of it, perhaps. Perhaps—it seems a foppish thing to say, but upon my soul I don't mean it in that light—she may have fallen in love with me, as I have fallen in love with her."

"He, he! Mr. Alfred, her old playfellow too, you remember, Mr. Craggs," said Snitchey, with a disconcerted laugh; "knew her almost from a baby!"

"Which makes it the more probable that she may be tired of his idea," calmly pursued the client, "and not indisposed

ange it for the newer one of another lover, who presents himself
is presented by his horse) under romantic circumstances; has
not unfavourable reputation—with a country girl—of having
l thoughtlessly and gaily, without doing much harm to any-
r; and who, for his youth and figure, and so forth—this may
l foppish again, but upon my soul I don't mean it in that light
light perhaps pass muster in a crowd with Mr. Alfred him-
"

There was no gainsaying the last clause, certainly; and Mr.
chey, glancing at him, thought so. There was something
rally graceful and pleasant in the very carelessness of his air.
eemed to suggest, of his comely face and well-knit figure, that
r might be greatly better if he chose: and that, once roused
made earnest (but he never had been earnest yet), he could be
of fire and purpose. "A dangerous sort of libertine," thought
shrewd lawyer, "to seem to catch the spark he wants from a
ng lady's eyes."

"Now, observe, Snitchey," he continued, rising and taking him
the button, "and Craggs," taking him by the button also, and
ing one partner on either side of him, so that neither might
de him. "I don't ask you for any advice. You are right to
p quite aloof from all parties in such a matter, which is not
in which grave men like you could interfere, on any side. I
briefly going to review in half-a-dozen words, my position and
ntion, and then I shall leave it to you to do the best for me,
money matters, that you can: seeing, that, if I run away with
Doctor's beautiful daughter (as I hope to do, and to become
ther man under her bright influence), it will be, for the moment,
re chargeable than running away alone. But I shall soon make
that up in an altered life."

"I think it will be better not to hear this, Mr. Craggs?" said
tchey, looking at him across the client.

"*I* think not," said Craggs.—Both listening attentively.

"Well! You needn't hear it," replied their client. "I'll
ntion it, however. I don't mean to ask the Doctor's consent,
ause he wouldn't give it me. But I mean to do the Doctor no
ng or harm, because (besides there being nothing serious in
h trifles, as he says) I hope to rescue his child, my Marion,
m what I see—I *know*—she dreads, and contemplates with
ery: that is, the return of this old lover. If anything in the
ld is true, it is true that she dreads his return. Nobody is
ured so far. I am so harried and worried here just now, that I
d the life of a flying-fish; skulk about in the dark, am shut out
my own house, and warned off my own grounds: but that house,

and those grounds, and many an acre besides, will come ba me one day, as you know and say; and Marion will probal richer—on your showing, who are never sanguine—ten years as my wife, than as the wife of Alfred Heathfield, whose she dreads (remember that), and in whom or in any ma passion is not surpassed. Who is injured yet? It is a fai throughout. My right is as good as his, if she decide i favour; and I will try my right by her alone. You will l know no more after this, and I will tell you no more. No know my purpose, and wants. When must I leave here?"

"In a week," said Snitchey. "Mr. Craggs?—"

"In something less, I should say," responded Craggs.

"In a month," said the client, after attentively watchin two faces. "This day month. To-day is Thursday. Succ fail, on this day month I go."

"It's too long a delay," said Snitchey; "much too long. let it be so. I thought he'd have stipulated for three," he mured to himself. "Are you going? Good night, Sir."

"Good night!" returned the client, shaking hands wit Firm. "You'll live to see me making a good use of riche Henceforth, the star of my destiny is, Marion!"

"Take care of the stairs, Sir," replied Snitchey; "for she shine there. Good night!"

"Good night!"

So they both stood at the stair-head with a pair of office-ca watching him down; and when he had gone away, stood l at each other.

"What do you think of all this, Mr. Craggs?" said Snit

Mr. Craggs shook his head.

"It was our opinion, on the day when that releas executed, that there was something curious in the parting o pair, I recollect," said Snitchey.

"It was," said Mr. Craggs.

"Perhaps he deceives himself altogether," pursued Mr. Sni locking up the fireproof box, and putting it away; "or if he a little bit of fickleness and perfidy is not a miracle, Mr. C And yet I thought that pretty face was very true. I tho said Mr. Snitchey, putting on his great-coat (for the weathe very cold), drawing on his gloves, and snuffing out one c "that I had even seen her character becoming stronger and resolved of late. More like her sister's."

"Mrs. Craggs was of the same opinion," returned Craggs.

"I'd really give a trifle to-night," observed Mr. Snitchey was a good-natured man, "if I could believe that Mr. Warde

ning without his host; but light-headed, capricious, and un-
ted as he is, he knows something of the world and its people
ught to, for he has bought what he does know, dear enough);
can't quite think that. We had better not interfere: we can
thing, Mr. Craggs, but keep quiet."
Nothing," returned Craggs.
Our friend the Doctor makes light of such things," said Mr.
ney, shaking his head. "I hope he mayn't stand in need of
ilosophy. Our friend Alfred talks of the battle of life," he
his head again, "I hope he mayn't be cut down early in the
Have you got your hat, Mr. Craggs? I am going to put
her candle out."
r. Craggs replying in the affirmative, Mr. Snitchey suited the
to the word, and they groped their way out of the council-
ber: now as dark as the subject, or the law in general.

y story passes to a quiet little study, where, on that same
the sisters and the hale old Doctor sat by a cheerful fireside.
was working at her needle. Marion read aloud from a book
e her. The Doctor, in his dressing-gown and slippers, with
eet spread out upon the warm rug, leaned back in his easy-
and listened to the book, and looked upon his daughters.
ney were very beautiful to look upon. Two better faces for a
le, never made a fireside bright and sacred. Something of
ifference between them had been softened down in three
time; and enthroned upon the clear brow of the younger
, looking through her eyes, and thrilling in her voice, was the
earnest nature that her own motherless youth had ripened in
lder sister long ago. But she still appeared at once the
er and weaker of the two; still seemed to rest her head upon
ster's breast, and put her trust in her, and look into her eyes
unsel and reliance. Those loving eyes, so calm, serene, and
ful, as of old.
'And being in her own home,'" read Marion, from the book;
r home made exquisitely dear by these remembrances, she now
to know that the great trial of her heart must soon come
nd could not be delayed. Oh Home, our comforter and friend
others fall away, to part with whom, at any step between the
e and the grave——'"
Marion, my love!" said Grace.
Why, Puss!" exclaimed her father, "what's the matter?"
e put her hand upon the hand her sister stretched towards
nd read on; her voice still faltering and trembling, though
ade an effort to command it when thus interrupted.

"'To part with whom, at any step between the cradle and grave, is always sorrowful. Oh Home, so true to us, so oft slighted in return, be lenient to them that turn away from th and do not haunt their erring footsteps too reproachfully! Let kind looks, no well-remembered smiles, be seen upon thy phant face. Let no ray of affection, welcome, gentleness, forbearan cordiality, shine from thy white head. Let no old loving word tone rise up in judgment against thy deserter; but if thou ca look harshly and severely, do, in mercy to the Penitent!'"

"Dear Marion, read no more to-night," said Grace—for she weeping.

"I cannot," she replied, and closed the book. "The wo seem all on fire!"

The Doctor was amused at this; and laughed as he patted on the head.

"What! overcome by a story-book!" said Doctor Jedd "Print and paper! Well, well, it's all one. It's as rational make a serious matter of print and paper as of anything else. dry your eyes, love, dry your eyes. I dare say the heroine has home again long ago, and made it up all round—and if she has a real home is only four walls; and a fictitious one, mere rags ink. What's the matter now?"

"It's only me, Mister," said Clemency, putting in her head the door.

"And what's the matter with *you?*" said the Doctor.

"Oh, bless you, nothing an't the matter with me," retur Clemency—and truly too, to judge from her well-soaped face, which there gleamed as usual the very soul of good humour, whi ungainly as she was, made her quite engaging. Abrasions on elbows are not generally understood, it is true, to range within th class of personal charms called beauty-spots. But it is bet going through the world, to have the arms chafed in that nar passage, than the temper: and Clemency's was sound and wh as any beauty's in the land.

"Nothing an't the matter with me," said Clemency, enteri "but—come a little closer, Mister."

The Doctor, in some astonishment, complied with this invitati

"You said I wasn't to give you one before them, you kno said Clemency.

A novice in the family might have supposed, from her ext ordinary ogling as she said it, as well as from a singular rapture ecstasy which pervaded her elbows, as if she were embrac herself, that "one," in its most favourable interpretation, meant chaste salute. Indeed the Doctor himself seemed alarmed, for

nent; but quickly regained his composure, as Clemency, having recourse to both her pockets—beginning with the right one, g away to the wrong one, and afterwards coming back to the t one again—produced a letter from the Post-office.

'Britain was riding by on a errand," she chuckled, handing it he Doctor, "and see the Mail come in, and waited for it. re's A. H. in the corner. Mr. Alfred's on his journey home, I We shall have a wedding in the house—there was two spoons ny saucer this morning. Oh Luck, how slow he opens it!"

All this she delivered, by way of soliloquy, gradually rising ner and higher on tiptoe, in her impatience to hear the news, making a corkscrew of her apron, and a bottle of her mouth. last, arriving at a climax of suspense, and seeing the Doctor engaged in the perusal of the letter, she came down flat upon soles of her feet again, and cast her apron, as a veil, over her d, in a mute despair, and inability to bear it any longer.

'Here! Girls!" cried the Doctor. "I can't help it: I never d keep a secret in my life. There are not many secrets, indeed, th being kept in such a—well! never mind that. Alfred's ing home, my dears, directly."

'Directly!" exclaimed Marion.

'What! The story-book is soon forgotten!" said the Doctor, hing her cheek. "I thought the news would dry those tears. 'Let it be a surprise,' he says, here. But I can't let it be rprise. He must have a welcome."

'Directly!" repeated Marion.

'Why, perhaps not what your impatience calls 'directly,'" rned the Doctor; "but pretty soon too. Let us see. Let us To-day is Thursday, is it not? Then he promises to be , this day month."

'This day month!" repeated Marion, softly.

'A gay day and a holiday for us," said the cheerful voice of her er Grace, kissing her in congratulation. "Long looked forward dearest, and come at last."

She answered with a smile; a mournful smile, but full of erly affection: and as she looked in her sister's face, and listened he quiet music of her voice, picturing the happiness of this rn, her own face glowed with hope and joy.

And with a something else: a something shining more and e through all the rest of its expression: for which I have no ne. It was not exultation, triumph, proud enthusiasm. They not so calmly shown. It was not love and gratitude alone, gh love and gratitude were part of it. It emanated from no lid thought, for sordid thoughts do not light up the brow, and

hover on the lips, and move the spirit, like a fluttered light, un the sympathetic figure trembles.

Doctor Jeddler, in spite of his system of philosophy—which was continually contradicting and denying in practice, but mo famous philosophers have done that—could not help having much interest in the return of his old ward and pupil, as if it h been a serious event. So he sat himself down in his easy-ch again, stretched out his slippered feet once more upon the rug, re the letter over and over a great many times, and talked it ov more times still.

"Ah! The day was," said the Doctor, looking at the fi "when you and he, Grace, used to trot about arm-in-arm, in holiday time, like a couple of walking dolls. You remember?"

"I remember," she answered, with her pleasant laugh, a plying her needle busily.

"This day month, indeed?" mused the Doctor. "That hard seems a twelvemonth ago. And where was my little Mari then!"

"Never far from her sister," said Marion, cheerily, "howev little. Grace was everything to me, even when she was a you child herself."

"True, Puss, true," returned the Doctor. "She was a st little woman, was Grace, and a wise housekeeper, and a bu quiet, pleasant body; bearing with our humours and anticipati our wishes, and always ready to forget her own, even in th times. I never knew you positive or obstinate, Grace, my darli even then, on any subject but one."

"I am afraid I have changed sadly for the worse, sinc laughed Grace, still busy at her work. "What was that o father?"

"Alfred, of course," said the Doctor. "Nothing would se you but you must be called Alfred's wife; so we called y Alfred's wife; and you liked it better, I believe (odd as it see now), than being called a Duchess, if we could have made y one."

"Indeed!" said Grace, placidly.

"Why, don't you remember?" inquired the Doctor.

"I think I remember something of it," she returned, "but n much. It's so long ago." And as she sat at work, she humm the burden of an old song, which the Doctor liked.

"Alfred will find a real wife soon," she said, breaking o "and that will be a happy time indeed for all of us. My th years' trust is nearly at an end, Marion. It has been a very e one. I shall tell Alfred, when I give you back to him, that y

ave loved him dearly all the time, and that he has never once eeded my good services. May I tell him so, love?"

"Tell him, dear Grace," replied Marion, "that there never was trust so generously, nobly, steadfastly discharged; and that I ave loved *you*, all the time, dearer and dearer every day; and h! how dearly now!"

"Nay," said her cheerful sister, returning her embrace, "I can arcely tell him that; we will leave my deserts to Alfred's agination. It will be liberal enough, dear Marion; like your rn."

With that she resumed the work she had for a moment laid wn, when her sister spoke so fervently: and with it the old ng the Doctor liked to hear. And the Doctor, still reposing in s easy-chair, with his slippered feet stretched out before him on e rug, listened to the tune, and beat time on his knee with lfred's letter, and looked at his two daughters, and thought that ong the many trifles of the trifling world, these trifles were reeable enough.

Clemency Newcome, in the meantime, having accomplished her ssion and lingered in the room until she had made herself a rty to the news, descended to the kitchen, where her coadjutor, r. Britain, was regaling after supper, surrounded by such a entiful collection of bright pot-lids, well-scoured saucepans, rnished dinner-covers, gleaming kettles, and other tokens of her dustrious habits, arranged upon the walls and shelves, that he as in the centre of a hall of mirrors. The majority did not ve forth very flattering portraits of him, certainly; nor were ey by any means unanimous in their reflections; as some made n very long-faced, others very broad-faced, some tolerably well-oking, others vastly ill-looking, according to their several anners of reflecting: which were as various, in respect of one t, as those of so many kinds of men. But they all agreed that the midst of them sat, quite at his ease, an individual with a pe in his mouth, and a jug of beer at his elbow, who nodded ndescendingly to Clemency, when she stationed herself at the ne table.

"Well, Clemmy," said Britain, "how are you by this time, d what's the news?"

Clemency told him the news, which he received very graciously. gracious change had come over Benjamin from head to foot. e was much broader, much redder, much more cheerful, and ch jollier in all respects. It seemed as if his face had been d up in a knot before, and was now untwisted and smoothed out.

"There'll be another job for Snitchey and Craggs, I suppose,"

he observed, puffing slowly at his pipe. "More witnessing fo you and me, perhaps, Clemmy!"

"Lor!" replied his fair companion, with her favourite twist o her favourite joints. "I wish it was me, Britain!"

"Wish what was you?"

"A going to be married," said Clemency.

Benjamin took his pipe out of his mouth and laughed heartily "Yes! you're a likely subject for that!" he said. "Poor Clem! Clemency for her part laughed as heartily as he, and seemed much amused by the idea. "Yes," she assented, "I'm a likel subject for that; an't I?"

"*You*'ll never be married, you know," said Mr. Britai resuming his pipe.

"Don't you think I ever shall though?" said Clemency, i perfect good faith.

Mr. Britain shook his head. "Not a chance of it!"

"Only think!" said Clemency. "Well!—I suppose you mea to, Britain, one of these days; don't you?"

A question so abrupt, upon a subject so momentous, requir consideration. After blowing out a great cloud of smoke, an looking at it with his head now on this side and now on that, as it were actually the question, and he were surveying it in vario aspects, Mr. Britain replied that he wasn't altogether clear abo it, but—ye-es—he thought he might come to that at last.

"I wish her joy, whoever she may be!" cried Clemency.

"Oh she'll have that," said Benjamin; "safe enough."

"But she wouldn't have led quite such a joyful life as she wi lead, and wouldn't have had quite such a sociable sort of husban as she will have," said Clemency, spreading herself half over th table, and staring retrospectively at the candle, "if it hadn't bee for—not that I went to do it, for it was accidental, I am sure— it hadn't been for me; now would she, Britain?"

"Certainly not," returned Mr. Britain, by this time in th high state of appreciation of his pipe, when a man can open hi mouth but a very little way for speaking purposes; and sittin luxuriously immovable in his chair, can afford to turn only hi eyes towards a companion, and that very passively and gravely "Oh! I'm greatly beholden to you, you know, Clem."

"Lor, how nice that is to think of!" said Clemency.

At the same time, bringing her thoughts as well as her sigh to bear upon the candle-grease, and becoming abruptly reminiscen of its healing qualities as a balsam, she anointed her left elbo with a plentiful application of that remedy.

"You see I've made a good many investigations of one so

ıd another in my time," pursued Mr. Britain, with the rofundity of a sage; "having been always of an inquiring turn mind; and I've read a good many books about the general ights of things and Wrongs of things, for I went into the literary ıe myself, when I began life."

"Did you though!" cried the admiring Clemency.

"Yes," said Mr. Britain; "I was hid for the best part of two ars behind a bookstall, ready to fly out if anybody pocketed a olume; and after that, I was light porter to a stay and mantua-aker, in which capacity I was employed to carry about, in lskin baskets, nothing but deceptions—which soured my spirits d disturbed my confidence in human nature; and after that, I ard a world of discussions in this house, which soured my spirits esh; and my opinion after all is, that, as a safe and comfortable eetener of the same, and as a pleasant guide through life, there's thing like a nutmeg-grater."

Clemency was about to offer a suggestion, but he stopped her anticipating it.

"Com-bined," he added gravely, "with a thimble."

"Do as you wold, you know, and cetrer, eh!" observed emency, folding her arms comfortably in her delight at this owal, and patting her elbows. "Such a short cut, an't it?"

"I'm not sure," said Mr. Britain, "that it's what would be nsidered good philosophy. I've my doubts about that: but it ears well, and saves a quantity of snarling, which the genuine ticle don't always."

"See how you used to go on once, yourself, you know!" said emency.

"Ah!" said Mr. Britain. "But the most extraordinary thing, emmy, is that I should live to be brought round, through you. at's the strange part of it. Through you! Why, I suppose u haven't so much as half an idea in your head."

Clemency, without taking the least offence, shook it, and ughed, and hugged herself, and said, "No, she didn't suppose e had."

"I'm pretty sure of it," said Mr. Britain.

"Oh! I dare say you're right," said Clemency. "I don't etend to none. I don't want any."

Benjamin took his pipe from his lips, and laughed till the ars ran down his face. "What a natural you are, Clemmy!" said, shaking his head, with an infinite relish of the joke, and ping his eyes. Clemency, without the smallest inclination to pute it, did the like, and laughed as heartily as he.

"But I can't help liking you," said Mr. Britain; "you're a

regular good creature in your way; so shake hands, Clem. What ever happens, I'll always take notice of you, and be a friend t you."

"Will you?" returned Clemency. "Well! that's very goo of you."

"Yes, yes," said Mr. Britain, giving her his pipe to knock th ashes out of; "I'll stand by you. Hark! That's a curiou noise!"

"Noise!" repeated Clemency.

"A footstep outside. Somebody dropping from the wall, i sounded like," said Britain. "Are they all abed up stairs?"

"Yes, all abed by this time," she replied.

"Didn't you hear anything?"

"No."

They both listened, but heard nothing.

"I tell you what," said Benjamin, taking down a lantern "I'll have a look round before I go to bed myself, for satisfaction' sake. Undo the door while I light this, Clemmy."

Clemency complied briskly; but observed as she did so, tha he would only have his walk for his pains, that it was all hi fancy, and so forth. Mr. Britain said "very likely;" but sallie out, nevertheless, armed with the poker, and casting the light of th lantern far and near in all directions.

"It's as quiet as a churchyard," said Clemency, looking afte him; "and almost as ghostly too!"

Glancing back into the kitchen, she cried fearfully, as a ligh figure stole into her view, "What's that!"

"Hush!" said Marion, in an agitated whisper. "You hav always loved me, have you not!"

"Loved you, child! You may be sure I have."

"I am sure. And I may trust you, may I not? There is n one else just now, in whom I *can* trust."

"Yes," said Clemency, with all her heart.

"There is some one out there," pointing to the door, "whom must see, and speak with, to-night. Michael Warden, for God' sake retire! Not now!"

Clemency started with surprise and trouble as, following th direction of the speaker's eyes, she saw a dark figure standing i the doorway.

"In another moment you may be discovered," said Mario "Not now! Wait, if you can, in some concealment. I will come presently."

He waved his hand to her, and was gone.

"Don't go to bed. Wait here for me!" said Marion, hurriedly

i have been seeking to speak to you for an hour past. Oh, be ie to me!"

Eagerly seizing her bewildered hand, and pressing it with both r own to her breast—an action more expressive, in its passion of treaty, than the most eloquent appeal in words,—Marion with- ew; as the light of the returning lantern flashed into the om.

"All still and peaceable. Nobody there. Fancy, I suppose," id Mr. Britain, as he locked and barred the door. "One of e effects of having a lively imagination. Halloa! Why, what's e matter?"

Clemency, who could not conceal the effects of her surprise and ncern, was sitting in a chair: pale, and trembling from head to ot.

"Matter!" she repeated, chafing her hands and elbows, rvously, and looking anywhere but at him. "That's good in ou, Britain, that is! After going and frightening one out of ne's life with noises, and lanterns, and I don't know what all. latter! Oh, yes!"

"If you're frightened out of your life by a lantern, Clemmy," id Mr. Britain, composedly blowing it out and hanging it up gain, "that apparition's very soon got rid of. But you're as bold s brass in general," he said, stopping to observe her; "and were, fter the noise and the lantern too. What have you taken into our head? Not an idea, eh?"

But, as Clemency bade him good night very much after her sual fashion, and began to bustle about with a show of going to ed herself immediately, Little Britain, after giving utterance to he original remark that it was impossible to account for a oman's whims, bade her good night in return, and taking up his andle strolled drowsily away to bed.

When all was quiet, Marion returned.

"Open the door," she said; "and stand there close beside me, hile I speak to him, outside."

Timid as her manner was, it still evinced a resolute and ettled purpose, such as Clemency could not resist. She softly nbarred the door: but before turning the key, looked round on he young creature waiting to issue forth when she should open it.

The face was not averted or cast down, but looking full upon er, in its pride of youth and beauty. Some simple sense of the lightness of the barrier that interposed itself between the happy ome and honoured love of the fair girl, and what might be the esolation of that home, and shipwreck of its dearest treasure, mote so keenly on the tender heart of Clemency, and so filled it

to overflowing with sorrow and compassion, that, bursting int tears, she threw her arms round Marion's neck.

"It's little that I know, my dear," cried Clemency, "ver little; but I know that this should not be. Think of what yo do!"

"I have thought of it many times," said Marion, gently.

"Once more," urged Clemency. "Till to-morrow."

Marion shook her head.

"For Mr. Alfred's sake," said Clemency, with homely earnes ness. "Him that you used to love so dearly, once!"

She hid her face, upon the instant, in her hands, repeatin "Once!" as if it rent her heart.

"Let me go out," said Clemency, soothing her. "I'll tell hi what you like. Don't cross the door-step to-night. I'm sure n good will come of it. Oh, it was an unhappy day when Mr Warden was ever brought here! Think of your good fathe darling: of your sister."

"I have," said Marion, hastily raising her head. "You don know what I do. I *must* speak to him. You are the best an truest friend in all the world for what you have said to me, bu I must take this step. Will you go with me, Clemency," sh kissed her on her friendly face, "or shall I go alone?"

Sorrowing and wondering, Clemency turned the key, an opened the door. Into the dark and doubtful night that la beyond the threshold, Marion passed quickly, holding by he hand.

In the dark night he joined her, and they spoke togethe earnestly and long: and the hand that held so fast by Clemency' now trembled, now turned deadly cold, now clasped and closed o hers, in the strong feeling of the speech it emphasized unconsciously When they returned, he followed to the door; and pausing there a moment, seized the other hand, and pressed it to his lips. The stealthily withdrew.

The door was barred and locked again, and once again sh stood beneath her father's roof. Not bowed down by the secre that she brought there, though so young; but with that same expression on her face, for which I had no name before, an shining through her tears.

Again she thanked and thanked her humble friend, and trusted to her, as she said, with confidence, implicitly. Her chambe safely reached, she fell upon her knees; and with her secret weighin on her heart, could pray!

Could rise up from her prayers, so tranquil and serene, an bending over her fond sister in her slumber, look upon her face and

ile: though sadly: murmuring as she kissed her forehead, how that ace had been a mother to her, ever, and she loved her as a child!

Could draw the passive arm out her neck when lying down to t—it seemed to cling there, of own will, protectingly and derly even in sleep—and breathe on the parted lips, God bless !

Could sink into a peaceful sleep, self; but for one dream, in ich she cried out, in her ocent and touching voice, t she was te alone, they had forgotten

A month n passes, n at its liest pace. month ointed to apse be- een that ht and return, s quick foot, and t by, like apour. The day ved. A ng winter y, that ok the house, etimes, as

shivered in the blast. A day to make home doubly home. give the chimney corner new delights. To shed a ruddier upon the faces gathered round the hearth; and draw each ide group into a closer and more social league, against the

roaring elements without. Such a wild winter day as best prepare the way for shut-out night; for curtained rooms, and cheerful looks for music, laughter, dancing, light, and jovial entertainment!

All these the Doctor had in store to welcome Alfred back. They knew that he could not arrive till night; and they would make the night air ring, he said, as he approached. All his old friends should congregate about him. He should not miss a face that he had known and liked. No! They should every one be there.

So, guests were bidden, and musicians were engaged, and tables spread, and floors prepared for active feet, and bountiful provision made, of every hospitable kind. Because it was the Christmas season, and his eyes were all unused to English holly and its sturdy green, the dancing-room was garlanded and hung with it; and the red berries gleamed an English welcome to him, peeping from among the leaves.

It was a busy day for all of them: a busier day for none of them than Grace, who noiselessly presided everywhere, and was the cheerful mind of all the preparations. Many a time that day (as well as many a time within the fleeting month preceding it) did Clemency glance anxiously, and almost fearfully, at Marion. She saw her paler, perhaps, than usual; but there was a sweet composure on her face that made it lovelier than ever.

At night when she was dressed, and wore upon her head the wreath that Grace had proudly twined about it—its mimic flowers were Alfred's favourites, as Grace remembered when she chose them—that old expression, pensive, almost sorrowful, and yet so spiritual, high, and stirring, sat again upon her brow, enhanced a hundred-fold.

"The next wreath I adjust on this fair head, will be a marriage wreath," said Grace; "or I am no true prophet, dear."

Her sister smiled, and held her in her arms.

"A moment, Grace. Don't leave me yet. Are you sure that I want nothing more?"

Her care was not for that. It was her sister's face she thought of, and her eyes were fixed upon it, tenderly.

"My art," said Grace, "can go no farther, dear girl; nor your beauty. I never saw you look so beautiful as now."

"I never was so happy," she returned.

"Ay, but there is greater happiness in store. In such another home, as cheerful and as bright as this looks now," said Grace. "Alfred and his young wife will soon be living."

She smiled again. "It is a happy home, Grace, in your fancy. I can see it in your eyes. I know it *will* be happy, dear. How glad I am to know it."

"Well," cried the Doctor, bustling in. "Here we are, all dy for Alfred, eh? He can't be here until pretty late—an hour so before midnight—so there'll be plenty of time for making rry before he comes. He'll not find us with the ice unbroken. e up the fire here, Britain! Let it shine upon the holly till it lks again. It's a world of nonsense, Puss; true lovers and all rest of it—all nonsense; but we'll be nonsensical with the rest 'em, and give our true lover a mad welcome. Upon my word!" d the old Doctor, looking at his daughters proudly, "I'm not ar to-night, among other absurdities, but that I'm the father of o handsome girls."

"All that one of them has ever done, or may do—may do, rest father—to cause you pain or grief, forgive her," said rion: "forgive her now, when her heart is full. Say that you give her. That you will forgive her. That she shall always re your love, and—," and the rest was not said, for her face s hidden on the old man's shoulder.

"Tut, tut, tut," said the Doctor, gently. "Forgive! What ve I to forgive? Heyday, if our true lovers come back to flurry like this, we must hold 'em at a distance; we must send ex-sses out to stop 'em short upon the road, and bring 'em on a le or two a day, until we're properly prepared to meet 'em. ss me, Puss. Forgive! Why, what a silly child you are. If u had vexed and crossed me fifty times a day, instead of not at , I'd forgive you everything, but such a supplication. Kiss me in, Puss. There! Prospective and retrospective—a clear score tween us. Pile up the fire here! Would you freeze the people this bleak December night! Let us be light, and warm, and rry, or I'll not forgive some of you!"

So gaily the old Doctor carried it! And the fire was piled , and the lights were bright, and company arrived, and a mur-ring of lively tongues began, and already there was a pleasant of cheerful excitement stirring through all the house.

More and more company came flocking in. Bright eyes rkled upon Marion; smiling lips gave her joy of his return; ge mothers fanned themselves, and hoped she mightn't be too uthful and inconstant for the quiet round of home; impetuous thers fell into disgrace for too much exaltation of her beauty; ughters envied her; sons envied him; innumerable pairs of ers profited by the occasion; all were interested, animated, and ectant.

Mr. and Mrs. Craggs came arm in arm, but Mrs. Snitchey came ne. "Why, what's become of *him*?" inquired the Doctor.

The feather of a Bird of Paradise in Mrs. Snitchey's turban,

trembled as if the Bird of Paradise were alive again, when she sai that doubtless Mr. Craggs knew. *She* was never told.

"That nasty office," said Mrs. Craggs.

"I wish it was burnt down," said Mrs. Snitchey.

"He's—he's—there's a little matter of business that keeps m partner rather late," said Mr. Craggs, looking uneasily about him

"Oh—h! Business. Don't tell me!" said Mrs. Snitchey.

"*We* know what business means," said Mrs. Craggs.

But their not knowing what it meant, was perhaps the reas why Mrs. Snitchey's Bird of Paradise feather quivered so porten ously, and all the pendant bits on Mrs. Craggs's ear-rings shoo like little bells.

"I wonder *you* could come away, Mr. Craggs," said his wife.

"Mr. Craggs is fortunate, I'm sure!" said Mrs. Snitchey.

"That office so engrosses 'em," said Mrs. Craggs.

"A person with an office has no business to be married at all said Mrs. Snitchey.

Then, Mrs. Snitchey said, within herself, that that look of he had pierced to Craggs's soul, and he knew it: and Mrs. Crag observed, to Craggs, that "his Snitcheys" were deceiving hi behind his back, and he would find it out when it was too late.

Still, Mr. Craggs, without much heeding these remarks, look uneasily about him until his eye rested on Grace, to whom h immediately presented himself.

"Good evening, Ma'am," said Craggs. "You look charming Your—Miss—your sister, Miss Marion, is she——"

"Oh she's quite well, Mr. Craggs."

"Yes—I—is she here?" asked Craggs.

"Here! Don't you see her yonder? Going to dance?" sa Grace.

Mr. Craggs put on his spectacles to see the better; looked her through them, for some time; coughed; and put them, wi an air of satisfaction, in their sheath again, and in his pocket.

Now the music struck up, and the dance commenced. T bright fire crackled and sparkled, rose and fell, as though it join the dance itself, in right good fellowship. Sometimes it roared if it would make music too. Sometimes it flashed and beamed if it were the eye of the old room: it winked too, sometimes, li a knowing patriarch, upon the youthful whisperers in corne Sometimes it sported with the holly-boughs; and, shining on t leaves by fits and starts, made them look as if they were in t cold winter night again, and fluttering in the wind. Sometim its genial humour grew obstreperous, and passed all bounds; a then it cast into the room, among the twinkling feet, with a lo

burst, a shower of harmless little sparks, and in its exultation leaped and bounded, like a mad thing, up the broad old chimney.

Another dance was near its close, when Mr. Snitchey touched his partner, who was looking on, upon the arm.

Mr. Craggs started, as if his familiar had been a spectre.

"Is he gone?" he asked.

"Hush! He has been with me," said Snitchey, "for three hours and more. He went over everything. He looked into all our arrangements for him, and was very particular indeed. He—Humph!"

The dance was finished. Marion passed close before him, as he spoke. She did not observe him, or his partner; but looked over her shoulder towards her sister in the distance, as she slowly made her way into the crowd, and passed out of their view.

"You see! All safe and well," said Mr. Craggs. "He didn't recur to that subject, I suppose?"

"Not a word."

"And is he really gone? Is he safe away?"

"He keeps to his word. He drops down the river with the tide in that shell of a boat of his, and so goes out to sea on this dark night—a dare-devil he is—before the wind. There's no such lonely road anywhere else. That's one thing. The tide flows, he says, an hour before midnight about this time. I'm glad it's over." Mr. Snitchey wiped his forehead, which looked hot and anxious.

"What do you think," said Mr. Craggs, "about——"

"Hush!" replied his cautious partner, looking straight before him. "I understand you. Don't mention names, and don't let us seem to be talking secrets. I don't know what to think; and to tell you the truth, I don't care now. It's a great relief. His self-love deceived him, I suppose. Perhaps the young lady coquetted a little. The evidence would seem to point that way. Alfred not arrived?"

"Not yet," said Mr. Craggs. "Expected every minute."

"Good." Mr. Snitchey wiped his forehead again. "It's a great relief. I haven't been so nervous since we've been in partnership. I intend to spend the evening now, Mr. Craggs."

Mrs. Craggs and Mrs. Snitchey joined them as he announced this intention. The Bird of Paradise was in a state of extreme vibration; and the little bells were ringing quite audibly.

"It has been the theme of general comment, Mr. Snitchey," said Mrs. Snitchey. "I hope the office is satisfied."

"Satisfied with what, my dear?" asked Mr. Snitchey.

"With the exposure of a defenceless woman to ridicule and

remark," returned his wife. "That is quite in the way of office, *that* is."

"I really, myself," said Mrs. Craggs, "have been so accustomed to connect the office with everything opposed domesticity, that I am glad to know it as the avowed enem my peace. There is something honest in that, at all events."

"My dear," urged Mr. Craggs, "your good opinion is invalu but *I* never avowed that the office was the enemy of your pea

"No," said Mrs. Craggs, ringing a perfect peal upon the l bells. "Not you, indeed. You wouldn't be worthy of the o if you had the candour to."

"As to my having been away to-night, my dear," said Snitchey, giving her his arm, "the deprivation has been mine, sure; but, as Mr. Craggs knows——"

Mrs. Snitchey cut this reference very short by hitching husband to a distance, and asking him to look at that man. do her the favour to look at him!

"At which man, my dear?" said Mr. Snitchey.

"Your chosen companion; *I*'m no companion to you, Snitchey."

"Yes, yes, you are, my dear," he interposed.

"No, no, I'm not," said Mrs. Snitchey, with a majestic s "I know my station. Will you look at your chosen compa Mr. Snitchey; at your referee; at the keeper of your secrets the man you trust; at your other self, in short."

The habitual association of Self with Craggs, occasioned Snitchey to look in that direction.

"If you can look that man in the eye this night," said Snitchey, "and not know that you are deluded, practised u made the victim of his arts, and bent down prostrate to his by some unaccountable fascination which it is impossible to exp and against which no warning of mine is of the least avail: can say is—I pity you!"

At the very same moment Mrs. Craggs was oracular on cross subject. Was it possible, she said, that Craggs could so l himself to his Snitcheys, as not to feel his true position? Di mean to say that he had seen his Snitcheys come into that r and didn't plainly see that there was reservation, cunning, treacl in the man? Would he tell her that his very action, whe wiped his forehead and looked so stealthily about him, didn't that there was something weighing on the conscience of his pre Snitcheys (if he had a conscience), that wouldn't bear the li Did anybody but his Snitcheys come to festive entertainments a burglar?—which, by the way, was hardly a clear illustrati

the case, as he had walked in very mildly at the door. And would he still assert to her at noonday (it being nearly midnight), that his Snitcheys were to be justified through thick and thin, against all facts, and reason, and experience?

Neither Snitchey nor Craggs openly attempted to stem the current which had thus set in, but both were content to be carried gently along it, until its force abated; which happened at about the same time as a general movement for a country dance; when Mr. Snitchey proposed himself as a partner to Mrs. Craggs, and Mr. Craggs gallantly offered himself to Mrs. Snitchey; and after some such slight evasions as "why don't you ask somebody else?" and "you'll be glad, I know, if I decline," and "I wonder you can dance out of the office" (but this jocosely now), each lady graciously accepted, and took her place.

It was an old custom among them, indeed, to do so, and to pair off, in like manner, at dinners and suppers; for they were excellent friends, and on a footing of easy familiarity. Perhaps the false Craggs and the wicked Snitchey were a recognised fiction with the two wives, as Doe and Roe, incessantly running up and down bailiwicks, were with the two husbands: or perhaps the ladies had instituted, and taken upon themselves, these two shares in the business, rather than be left out of it altogether. But certain it is, that each wife went as gravely and steadily to work in her vocation as her husband did in his: and would have considered it almost impossible for the Firm to maintain a successful and respectable existence, without her laudable exertions.

But now the Bird of Paradise was seen to flutter down the middle; and the little bells began to bounce and jingle in poussette; and the Doctor's rosy face spun round and round, like an expressive pegtop highly varnished; and breathless Mr. Craggs began to doubt already, whether country dancing had been made "too easy," like the rest of life; and Mr. Snitchey, with his nimble cuts and capers, footed it for Self and Craggs, and half-a-dozen more.

Now too, the fire took fresh courage, favoured by the lively wind the dance awakened, and burnt clear and high. It was the Genius of the room, and present everywhere. It shone in people's eyes, it sparkled in the jewels on the snowy necks of girls, it twinkled at their ears as if it whispered to them slyly, it flashed about their waists, it flickered on the ground and made it rosy for their feet, it bloomed upon the ceiling that its glow might set off their bright faces, and it kindled up a general illumination in Mrs. Craggs's little belfry.

Now too, the lively air that fanned it, grew less gentle as the music quickened and the dance proceeded with new spirit; and a

breeze arose that made the leaves and berries dance upon the wall as they had often done upon the trees; and rustled in the room as if an invisible company of fairies, treading in the footsteps of the

good substantial revellers, were whirling after them. Now too, the feature of the Doctor's face could be distinguished as he spun and spun; and now there seemed a dozen Birds of Paradise in fitful flight; and now there were a thousand little bells at work; and

now a fleet of flying skirts was ruffled by a little tempest; when the music gave in, and the dance was over.

Hot and breathless as the Doctor was, it only made him more impatient for Alfred's coming.

"Anything been seen, Britain? Anything been heard?"

"Too dark to see far, Sir. Too much noise inside the house to hear."

"That's right! The gayer welcome for him. How goes the time?"

"Just twelve, Sir. He can't be long, Sir."

"Stir up the fire, and throw another log upon it," said the Doctor. "Let him see his welcome blazing out upon the night—good boy!—as he comes along!"

He saw it—Yes! From the chaise he caught the light, as he turned the corner by the old church. He knew the room from which it shone. He saw the wintry branches of the old trees between the light and him. He knew that one of those trees rustled musically in the summer time at the window of Marion's chamber.

The tears were in his eyes. His heart throbbed so violently that he could hardly bear his happiness. How often he had thought of this time—pictured it under all circumstances—feared that it might never come—yearned, and wearied for it—far away!

Again the light! Distinct and ruddy; kindled, he knew, to give him welcome, and to speed him home. He beckoned with his hand, and waved his hat, and cheered out, loud, as if the light were they, and they could see and hear him, as he dashed towards them through the mud and mire, triumphantly.

Stop! He knew the Doctor, and understood what he had done. He would not let it be a surprise to them. But he could make it one, yet, by going forward on foot. If the orchard gate were open, he could enter there; if not, the wall was easily climbed, as he knew of old; and he would be among them in an instant.

He dismounted from the chaise, and telling the driver—even that was not easy in his agitation—to remain behind for a few minutes, and then to follow slowly, ran on with exceeding swiftness, tried the gate, scaled the wall, jumped down on the other side, and stood panting in the old orchard.

There was a frosty rime upon the trees, which, in the faint light of the clouded moon, hung upon the smaller branches like dead garlands. Withered leaves crackled and snapped beneath his feet, as he crept softly on towards the house. The desolation of a winter night sat brooding on the earth, and in the sky. But

the red light came cheerily towards him from the windows: figures passed and repassed there: and the hum and murmur of voices greeted his ear sweetly.

Listening for hers: attempting, as he crept on, to detach it from the rest, and half-believing that he heard it: he had nearly reached the door, when it was abruptly opened, and a figure coming out encountered his. It instantly recoiled with a half-suppressed cry.

"Clemency," he said, "don't you know me?"

"Don't come in," she answered, pushing him back. "Go away. Don't ask me why. Don't come in."

"What is the matter?" he exclaimed.

"I don't know. I—I am afraid to think. Go back. Hark!"

There was a sudden tumult in the house. She put her hands upon her ears. A wild scream, such as no hands could shut out, was heard; and Grace—distraction in her looks and manner—rushed out at the door.

"Grace!" He caught her in his arms. "What is it! Is she dead!"

She disengaged herself, as if to recognise his face, and fell down at his feet.

A crowd of figures came about them from the house. Among them was her father, with a paper in his hand.

"What is it!" cried Alfred, grasping his hair with his hands, and looking in an agony from face to face, as he bent upon his knee beside the insensible girl. "Will no one look at me? Will no one speak to me? Does no one know me? Is there no voice among you all, to tell me what it is!"

There was a murmur among them. "She is gone."

"Gone!" he echoed.

"Fled, my dear Alfred!" said the Doctor, in a broken voice, and with his hands before his face. "Gone from her home and us. To-night! She writes that she has made her innocent and blameless choice—entreats that we will forgive her—prays that we will not forget her—and is gone."

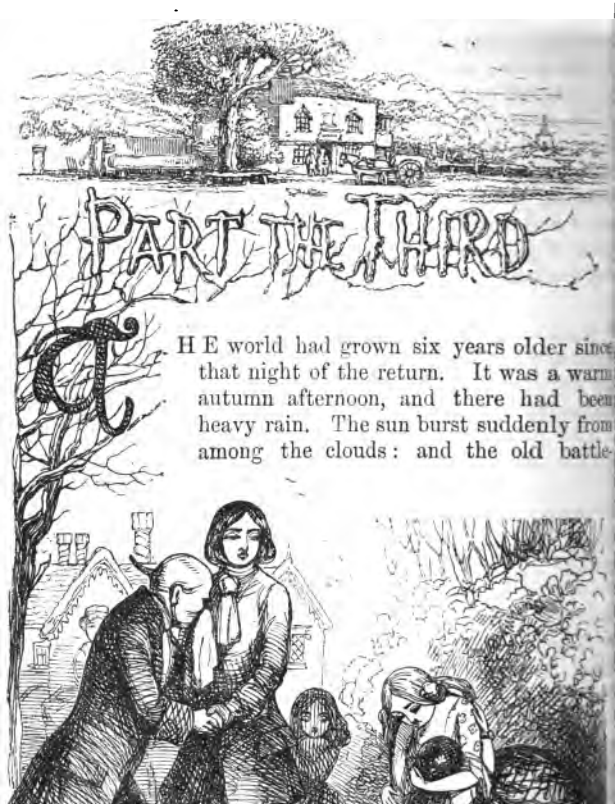
"With whom? Where?"

He started up, as if to follow in pursuit, but when they gave way to let him pass, looked wildly round upon them, staggered back, and sank down in his former attitude, clasping one of Grace's cold hands in his own.

There was a hurried running to and fro, confusion, noise, disorder, and no purpose. Some proceeded to disperse themselves about the roads, and some took horse, and some got lights, and some conversed together, urging that there was no trace or track

llow. Some approached him kindly, with the view of offering olation; some admonished him that Grace must be removed the house, and that he prevented it. He never heard them, he never moved.

The snow fell fast and thick. He looked up for a moment in air, and thought that those white ashes strewn upon his hopes misery, were suited to them well. He looked round on the tening ground, and thought how Marion's footprints would be ned and covered up, as soon as made, and even that remem- nce of her blotted out. But he never felt the weather and he er stirred.



PART THE THIRD

THE world had grown six years older since that night of the return. It was a warm autumn afternoon, and there had been heavy rain. The sun burst suddenly from among the clouds: and the old battle-

ground, sparkling brilliantly and cheerfully at sight of it in green place, flashed a responsive welcome there, which spread al the country side as if a joyful beacon had been lighted up, answered from a thousand stations.

How beautiful the landscape kindling in the light, and that luxuriant influence passing on like a celestial presence, brightening everything! The wood, a sombre mass before, revealed its varied tints of yellow, green, brown, red; its different forms of trees, with raindrops glittering on their leaves and twinkling as they fell. The verdant meadow-land, bright and glowing, seemed as if it had been blind a minute since, and now had found a sense of sight wherewith to look up at the shining sky. Corn-fields, hedge-rows, fences, homesteads, the clustered roofs, the steeple of the church, the stream, the watermill, all sprang out of the gloomy darkness, smiling. Birds sang sweetly, flowers raised their drooping heads, fresh scents arose from the invigorated ground; the blue expanse above, extended and diffused itself; already the sun's slanting rays pierced mortally the sullen bank of cloud that lingered in its flight; and a rainbow, spirit of all the colours that adorned the earth and sky, spanned the whole arch with its triumphant glory.

At such a time, one little roadside Inn, snugly sheltered behind a great elm-tree with a rare seat for idlers encircling its capacious bole, addressed a cheerful front towards the traveller, as a house of entertainment ought, and tempted him with many mute but significant assurances of a comfortable welcome. The ruddy sign-board perched up in the tree, with its golden letters winking in the sun, ogled the passer-by from among the green leaves, like a jolly face, and promised good cheer. The horse-trough, full of clear fresh water, and the ground below it sprinkled with droppings of fragrant hay, made every horse that passed prick up his ears. The crimson curtains in the lower rooms, and the pure white hangings in the little bedchambers above, beckoned, Come in! with every breath of air. Upon the bright green shutters, there were golden legends about beer and ale, and neat wines, and good beds; and an affecting picture of a brown jug frothing over at the top. Upon the window-sills were flowering plants in bright red pots, which made a lively show against the white front of the house; and in the darkness of the doorway there were streaks of light, which glanced off from the surfaces of bottles and tankards.

On the door-step, appeared a proper figure of a landlord, too; for though he was a short man, he was round and broad, and stood with his hands in his pockets, and his legs just wide enough apart to express a mind at rest upon the subject of the cellar, and an easy confidence—too calm and virtuous to become a swagger—in the general resources of the Inn. The superabundant moisture, trickling from everything after the late rain, set him off well. Nothing near him was thirsty. Certain top-heavy dahlias, looking over the palings of his neat well-ordered garden, had swilled as

much as they could carry—perhaps a trifle more—and may hav
been the worse for liquor; but the sweetbriar, roses, wall-flower
the plants at the windows, and the leaves on the old tree, were
the beaming state of moderate company that had taken no mo
than was wholesome for them, and had served to develope their be
qualities. Sprinkling dewy drops about them on the ground, the

seemed profuse of innocent and sparkling mirth, that did goo
where it lighted, softening neglected corners which the steady ra
could seldom reach, and hurting nothing.

This village Inn had assumed, on being established, an u
common sign. It was called The Nutmeg Grater. And underneat
that household word, was inscribed, up in the tree, on the same flan
ing board, and in the like golden characters, By Benjamin Britai

At a second glance, and on a more minute examination of his ace, you might have known that it was no other than Benjamin Britain himself who stood in the doorway—reasonably changed by ime, but for the better; a very comfortable host indeed.

"Mrs. B.," said Mr. Britain, looking down the road, "is rather ate. It's tea-time."

As there was no Mrs. Britain coming, he strolled leisurely out nto the road and looked up at the house, very much to his satisfac- ion. "It's just the sort of house," said Benjamin, "I should ish to stop at, if I didn't keep it."

Then he strolled towards the garden paling, and took a look at he dahlias. They looked over at him, with a helpless, drowsy anging of their heads: which bobbed again, as the heavy drops f wet dripped off them.

"You must be looked after," said Benjamin. "Memorandum, ot to forget to tell her so. She's a long time coming!"

Mr. Britain's better half seemed to be by so very much his etter half, that his own moiety of himself was utterly cast away nd helpless without her.

"She hadn't much to do, I think," said Ben. "There were a ew little matters of business after market, but not many. Oh! ere we are at last!"

A chaise-cart, driven by a boy, came clattering along the road: nd seated in it, in a chair, with a large well-saturated umbrella pread out to dry behind her, was the plump figure of a matronly oman, with her bare arms folded across a basket which she carried n her knee, several other baskets and parcels lying crowded round her, and a certain bright good-nature in her face and ontented awkwardness in her manner, as she jogged to and fro with he motion of her carriage, which smacked of old times, even in he distance. Upon her nearer approach, this relish of bygone ays was not diminished; and when the cart stopped at The utmeg Grater door, a pair of shoes, alighting from it, slipped imbly through Mr. Britain's open arms, and came down with a ubstantial weight upon the pathway, which shoes could hardly ave belonged to any one but Clemency Newcome.

In fact they did belong to her, and she stood in them, and a sy comfortable-looking soul she was: with as much soap on her ossy face as in times of yore, but with whole elbows now, that had own quite dimpled in her improved condition.

"You're late, Clemmy!" said Mr. Britain.

"Why, you see, Ben, I've had a deal to do!" she replied, oking busily after the safe removal into the house of all the ckages and baskets; "eight, nine, ten,—where's eleven? Oh!

my basket's eleven! It's all right. Put the horse up, Harry, if he coughs again give him a warm mash to-night. Eight, ten. Why where's eleven? Oh I forgot, it's all right. H the children, Ben?"

"Hearty, Clemmy, hearty."

"Bless their precious faces!" said Mrs. Britain, unbonn her own round countenance (for she and her husband were by time in the bar), and smoothing her hair with her open h "Give us a kiss, old man."

Mr. Britain promptly complied.

"I think," said Mrs. Britain, applying herself to her po and drawing forth an immense bulk of thin books and crun papers, a very kennel of dogs'-ears: "I've done everything. all settled—turnips sold—brewer's account looked into and pa 'bacco pipes ordered—seventeen pound four, paid into the Ba Doctor Heathfield's charge for little Clem—you'll guess what is—Doctor Heathfield won't take nothing again, Ben."

"I thought he wouldn't," returned Britain.

"No. He says whatever family you was to have, Ben, he'd put you to the cost of a halfpenny. Not if you was to have twe

Mr. Britain's face assumed a serious expression, and he l hard at the wall.

"An't it kind of him?" said Clemency.

"Very," returned Mr. Britain. "It's the sort of kindness I wouldn't presume upon, on any account."

"No," retorted Clemency. "Of course not. Then there' pony—he fetched eight pound two; and that an't bad, is it?

"It's very good," said Ben.

"I'm glad you're pleased!" exclaimed his wife. "I th you would be; and I think that's all, and so no more at pr from yours and cetrer, C. Britain. Ha ha ha! There! Ta the papers, and lock 'em up. Oh! Wait a minute. Her printed bill to stick on the wall. Wet from the printer's. nice it smells!"

"What's this?" said Ben, looking over the document.

"I don't know," replied his wife. "I haven't read a word

"'To be sold by Auction,'" read the host of The Nu Grater, "'unless previously disposed of by private contract.'"

"They always put that," said Clemency.

"Yes, but they don't always put this," he returned. "' here, 'Mansion,' &c.—'offices,' &c., 'shrubberies,' &c., 'ring fe &c. 'Messrs. Snitchey and Craggs,' &c., 'ornamental portic the unencumbered freehold property of Michael Warden, Esq intending to continue to reside abroad'!"

"Intending to continue to reside abroad!" repeated Clemency.

"Here it is," said Britain. "Look!"

"And it was only this very day that I heard it whispered at he old house, that better and plainer news had been half promised f her, soon!" said Clemency, shaking her head sorrowfully, and atting her elbows as if the recollection of old times unconsciously wakened her old habits. "Dear, dear, dear! There'll be heavy earts, Ben, yonder."

Mr. Britain heaved a sigh, and shook his head, and said he ouldn't make it out: he had left off trying long ago. With that emark, he applied himself to putting up the bill just inside the ar window: and Clemency, after meditating in silence for a few ioments, roused herself, cleared her thoughtful brow, and bustled ff to look after the children.

Though the host of The Nutmeg Grater had a lively regard for is good-wife, it was of the old patronising kind; and she amused im mightily. Nothing would have astonished him so much, as o have known for certain from any third party, that it was she ho managed the whole house, and made him, by her plain raightforward thrift, good-humour, honesty, and industry, a riving man. So easy it is, in any degree of life (as the world ery often finds it), to take those cheerful natures that never sert their merit, at their own modest valuation; and to conceive flippant liking of people for their outward oddities and eccen- icities, whose innate worth, if we would look so far, might make s blush in the comparison!

It was comfortable to Mr. Britain, to think of his own con- escension in having married Clemency. She was a perpetual stimony to him of the goodness of his heart, and the kindness of is disposition; and he felt that her being an excellent wife was n illustration of the old precept that virtue is its own reward.

He had finished wafering up the bill, and had locked the ouchers for her day's proceedings in the cupboard—chuckling all he time, over her capacity for business—when, returning with he news that the two Master Britains were playing in the coach- ouse, under the superintendence of one Betsey, and that little lem was sleeping "like a picture," she sat down to tea, which ad awaited her arrival, on a little table. It was a very neat ttle bar, with the usual display of bottles and glasses; a sedate ock, right to the minute (it was half-past five); everything in s place, and everything furbished and polished up to the very tmost.

"It's the first time I've sat down quietly to-day, I declare," id Mrs. Britain, taking a long breath, as if she had sat down for

the night; but getting up again immediately to hand her husban his tea, and cut him his bread-and-butter; "how that bill do set me thinking of old times!"

"Ah!" said Mr. Britain, handling his saucer like an oyste and disposing of its contents on the same principle.

"That same Mr. Michael Warden," said Clemency, shakin her head at the notice of sale, "lost me my old place."

"And got you your husband," said Mr. Britain.

"Well! So he did," retorted Clemency, "and many thank to him."

"Man's the creature of habit," said Mr. Britain, surveying he over his saucer. "I had somehow got used to you, Clem; and found I shouldn't be able to get on without you. So we went an got made man and wife. Ha, ha! We! Who'd have though it!"

"Who indeed!" cried Clemency. "It was very good of yo Ben."

"No, no, no," replied Mr. Britain, with an air of self-denia "Nothing worth mentioning."

"Oh yes it was, Ben," said his wife, with great simplicity "I'm sure I think so; and am very much obliged to you. Ah! looking again at the bill; "when she was known to be gone, an out of reach, dear girl, I couldn't help telling—for her sake qui as much as theirs—what I knew, could I?"

"You told it, anyhow," observed her husband.

"And Doctor Jeddler," pursued Clemency, putting down h tea-cup, and looking thoughtfully at the bill, "in his grief an passion turned me out of house and home! I never have been s glad of anything in all my life, as that I didn't say an angry wo to him, and hadn't an angry feeling towards him, even then; fo he repented that truly, afterwards. How often he has sat in thi room, and told me over and over again he was sorry for it!—th last time, only yesterday, when you were out. How often he h sat in this room, and talked to me, hour after hour, about on thing and another, in which he made believe to be interested!— but only for the sake of the days that are gone away, and becaus he knows she used to like me, Ben!"

"Why, how did you ever come to catch a glimpse of tha Clem?" asked her husband: astonished that she should have distinct perception of a truth which had only dimly suggeste itself to his inquiring mind.

"I don't know I'm sure," said Clemency, blowing her tea, t cool it. "Bless you, I couldn't tell you if you was to offer me reward of a hundred pound."

He might have pursued this metaphysical subject but for her catching a glimpse of a substantial fact behind him, in the shape of a gentleman attired in mourning, and cloaked and booted like a rider on horseback, who stood at the bar-door. He seemed attentive to their conversation, and not at all impatient to interrupt it.

Clemency hastily rose at this sight. Mr. Britain also rose and saluted the guest. "Will you please to walk up stairs, Sir? There's a very nice room up stairs, Sir."

"Thank you," said the stranger, looking earnestly at Mr. Britain's wife. "May I come in here?"

"Oh, surely, if you like, Sir," returned Clemency, admitting him. "What would you please to want, Sir?"

The bill had caught his eye, and he was reading it.

"Excellent property that, Sir," observed Mr. Britain.

He made no answer; but turning round, when he had finished reading, looked at Clemency with the same observant curiosity as before. "You were asking me," he said, still looking at her—

"What you would please to take, Sir," answered Clemency, stealing a glance at him in return.

"If you will let me have a draught of ale," he said, moving to a table by the window, "and will let me have it here, without being any interruption to your meal, I shall be much obliged to you."

He sat down as he spoke, without any further parley, and looked out at the prospect. He was an easy, well-knit figure of a man in the prime of life. His face, much browned by the sun, was shaded by a quantity of dark hair; and he wore a moustache. His beer being set before him, he filled out a glass, and drank, good-humouredly, to the house; adding, as he put the tumbler down again:

"It's a new house, is it not?"

"Not particularly new, Sir," replied Mr. Britain.

"Between five and six years old," said Clemency: speaking very distinctly.

"I think I heard you mention Doctor Jeddler's name, as I came in," inquired the stranger. "That bill reminds me of him; for I happen to know something of that story, by hearsay, and through certain connections of mine.—Is the old man living?"

"Yes, he's living, Sir," said Clemency.

"Much changed?"

"Since when, Sir?" returned Clemency, with remarkable emphasis and expression.

"Since his daughter—went away."

"Yes! he's greatly changed since then," said Clemenc "He's grey and old, and hasn't the same way with him at a but I think he's happy now. He has taken on with his sist since then, and goes to see her very often. That did him go directly. At first, he was sadly broken down; and it was enou to make one's heart bleed, to see him wandering about, railing the world; but a great change for the better came over him aft a year or two, and then he began to like to talk about his l daughter, and to praise her, ay and the world too! and was ne tired of saying, with the tears in his poor eyes, how beautiful a good she was. He had forgiven her then. That was abo the same time as Miss Grace's marriage. Britain, you r member?"

Mr. Britain remembered very well.

"The sister *is* married then," returned the stranger. H paused for some time before he asked, "To whom?"

Clemency narrowly escaped oversetting the tea-board, in h emotion at this question.

"Did *you* never hear?" she said.

"I should like to hear," he replied, as he filled his glass agai and raised it to his lips.

"Ah! It would be a long story, if it was properly told," sa Clemency, resting her chin on the palm of her left hand, a supporting that elbow on her right hand, as she shook her hea and looked back through the intervening years, as if she we looking at a fire. "It would be a long story, I am sure."

"But told as a short one," suggested the stranger.

"Told as a short one," repeated Clemency in the same though ful tone, and without any apparent reference to him, or conscio ness of having auditors, "what would there be to tell? That th grieved together, and remembered her together, like a person dea that they were so tender of her, never would reproach her, call her back to one another as she used to be, and found excuses f her? Every one knows that. I'm sure *I* do. No one bette added Clemency, wiping her eyes with her hand.

"And so," suggested the stranger.

"And so," said Clemency, taking him up mechanically, a without any change in her attitude or manner, "they at last we married. They were married on her birthday—it comes rou again to-morrow—very quiet, very humble like, but very happ Mr. Alfred said, one night when they were walking in th orchard, 'Grace, shall our wedding-day be Marion's birthday And it was."

"And they have lived happily together?" said the stranger.

"Ay," said Clemency. "No two people ever more so. They have had no sorrow but this."

She raised her head as with a sudden attention to the circumstances under which she was recalling these events, and looked quickly at the stranger. Seeing that his face was turned toward the window, and that he seemed intent upon the prospect, she made some eager signs to her husband, and pointed to the bill, and moved her mouth as if she were repeating with great energy, one word or phrase to him over and over again. As she uttered no sound, and as her dumb motions like most of her gestures were of a very extraordinary kind, this unintelligible conduct reduced Mr. Britain to the confines of despair. He stared at the table, at the stranger, at the spoons, at his wife—followed her pantomime with looks of deep amazement and perplexity—asked in the same language, was it property in danger, was it he in danger, was it she—answered her signals with other signals expressive of the deepest distress and confusion—followed the motions of her lips—guessed half aloud "milk and water," "monthly warning," "mice and walnuts"—and couldn't approach her meaning.

Clemency gave it up at last, as a hopeless attempt; and moving her chair by very slow degrees a little nearer to the stranger, sat with her eyes apparently cast down but glancing sharply at him now and then, waiting until he should ask some other question. She had not to wait long; for he said, presently:

"And what is the after history of the young lady who went away? They know it, I suppose?"

Clemency shook her head. "I've heard," she said, "that Doctor Jeddler is thought to know more of it than he tells. Miss Grace has had letters from her sister, saying that she was well and happy, and made much happier by her being married to Mr. Alfred: and has written letters back. But there's a mystery about her life and fortunes, altogether, which nothing has cleared up to this hour, and which——"

She faltered here, and stopped.

"And which——" repeated the stranger.

"Which only one other person, I believe, could explain," said Clemency, drawing her breath quickly.

"Who may that be?" asked the stranger.

"Mr. Michael Warden!" answered Clemency, almost in a shriek: at once conveying to her husband what she would have had him understand before, and letting Michael Warden know that he was recognised.

"You remember me, Sir?" said Clemency, trembling with

emotion; "I saw just now you did! You remember me, th night in the garden. I was with her!"

"Yes. You were," he said.

"Yes, Sir," returned Clemency. "Yes, to be sure. This my husband, if you please. Ben, my dear Ben, run to M Grace—run to Mr. Alfred—run somewhere, Ben! Bring som body here, directly!"

"Stay!" said Michael Warden, quietly interposing hims between the door and Britain. "What would you do?"

"Let them know that you are here, Sir," answered Clemen clapping her hands in sheer agitation. "Let them know th they may hear of her, from your own lips; let them know th she is not quite lost to them, but that she will come home ag yet, to bless her father and her loving sister—even her old serva even me," she struck herself upon the breast with both han "with a sight of her sweet face. Run, Ben, run!" And s she pressed him on towards the door, and still Mr. Warden sto before it, with his hand stretched out, not angrily, but sorrowfull

"Or perhaps," said Clemency, running past her husband, a catching in her emotion at Mr. Warden's cloak, "perhaps sh here now; perhaps she's close by. I think from your manner s is. Let me see her, Sir, if you please. I waited on her when s was a little child. I saw her grow to be the pride of all th place. I knew her when she was Mr. Alfred's promised wife. tried to warn her when you tempted her away. I know wh her old home was when she was like the soul of it, and how changed when she was gone and lost. Let me speak to her, you please!"

He gazed at her with compassion, not unmixed with wonde but he made no gesture of assent.

"I don't think she *can* know," pursued Clemency, "how tru they forgive her; how they love her; what joy it would be them, to see her once more. She may be timorous of going hom Perhaps if she sees me, it may give her new heart. Only tell m truly, Mr. Warden, is she with you?"

"She is not," he answered, shaking his head.

This answer, and his manner, and his black dress, and h coming back so quietly, and his announced intention of continui to live abroad, explained it all. Marion was dead.

He didn't contradict her; yes, she was dead! Clemency s down, hid her face upon the table, and cried.

At that moment, a grey-headed old gentleman came running quite out of breath, and panting so much that his voice w scarcely to be recognised as the voice of Mr. Snitchey.

"Good Heaven, Mr. Warden!" said the lawyer, taking him aside, "what wind has blown——" He was so blown himself, that he couldn't get on any further until after a pause, when he added, feebly, "you here?"

"An ill wind, I am afraid," he answered. "If you could have heard what has just passed—how I have been besought and entreated to perform impossibilities—what confusion and affliction I carry with me!"

"I can guess it all. But why did you ever come here, my good Sir?" retorted Snitchey.

"Come! How should I know who kept the house? When I sent my servant on to you, I strolled in here because the place was new to me; and I had a natural curiosity in everything new and old, in these old scenes; and it was outside the town. I wanted to communicate with you first, before appearing there. I wanted to know what people would say to me. I see by your manner that you can tell me. If it were not for your confounded caution, I should have been possessed of everything long ago."

"Our caution!" returned the lawyer. "Speaking for Self and Craggs—deceased," here Mr. Snitchey, glancing at his hat-band, shook his head, "how can you reasonably blame us, Mr. Warden? It was understood between us that the subject was never to be renewed, and that it wasn't a subject on which grave and sober men like us (I made a note of your observations at the time) could interfere. Our caution too! When Mr. Craggs, Sir, went down to his respected grave in the full belief——"

"I had given a solemn promise of silence until I should return, whenever that might be," interrupted Mr. Warden; "and I have kept it."

"Well, Sir, and I repeat it," returned Mr. Snitchey, "we were bound to silence too. We were bound to silence in our duty towards ourselves, and in our duty towards a variety of clients, you among them, who were as close as wax. It was not our place to make inquiries of you on such a delicate subject. I had my suspicions, Sir; but it is not six months since I have known the truth, and been assured that you lost her."

"By whom?" inquired his client.

"By Doctor Jeddler himself, Sir, who at last reposed that confidence in me voluntarily. He, and only he, has known the whole truth, years and years."

"And you know it?" said his client.

"I do, Sir!" replied Snitchey; "and I have also reason to know that it will be broken to her sister to-morrow evening. They have given her that promise. In the meantime, perhaps you'll give

me the honour of your company at my house; being unexpected a your own. But, not to run the chance of any more such difficulties as you have had here, in case you should be recognised—though you're a good deal changed; I think I might have passed yo myself, Mr. Warden—we had better dine here, and walk on i the evening. It's a very good place to dine at, Mr. Warden your own property, by the bye. Self and Craggs (deceased) too a chop here sometimes, and had it very comfortably served. Mr Craggs, Sir," said Snitchey, shutting his eyes tight for an instant and opening them again, "was struck off the roll of life too soon."

"Heaven forgive me for not condoling with you," returned Michael Warden, passing his hand across his forehead, "but I'm like a man in a dream at present. I seem to want my wits. Mr Craggs—yes—I am very sorry we have lost Mr. Craggs." But h looked at Clemency as he said it, and seemed to sympathise with Ben, consoling her.

"Mr. Craggs, Sir," observed Snitchey, "didn't find life, I regret to say, as easy to have and to hold as his theory made it out, or h would have been among us now. It's a great loss to me. He was my right arm, my right leg, my right ear, my right eye, was Mr Craggs. I am paralytic without him. He bequeathed his share of the business to Mrs. Craggs, her executors, administrators, and assigns. His name remains in the Firm to this hour. I try, in childish sort of a way, to make believe, sometimes, that he's alive You may observe that I speak for Self and Craggs—deceased Sir—deceased," said the tender-hearted attorney, waving his pocket handkerchief.

Michael Warden, who had still been observant of Clemency turned to Mr. Snitchey when he ceased to speak, and whispered i his ear.

"Ah, poor thing!" said Snitchey, shaking his head. "Yes She was always very faithful to Marion. She was always very fond of her. Pretty Marion! Poor Marion! Cheer up, Mistress —you *are* married now, you know, Clemency."

Clemency only sighed, and shook her head.

"Well, well! Wait till to-morrow," said the lawyer, kindly.

"To-morrow can't bring back the dead to life, Mister," said Clemency, sobbing.

"No. It can't do that, or it would bring back Mr. Craggs deceased," returned the lawyer. "But it may bring some soothing circumstances; it may bring some comfort. Wait till to-morrow!

So Clemency, shaking his proffered hand, said she would; and Britain, who had been terribly cast down at sight of his despondent wife (which was like the business hanging its head), said that wa

ght; and Mr. Snitchey and Michael Warden went up stairs; and here they were soon engaged in a conversation so cautiously conducted, that no murmur of it was audible above the clatter of plates and dishes, the hissing of the frying-pan, the bubbling of saucepans, the low monotonous waltzing of the jack—with a dreadful click every now and then as if it had met with some mortal accident to its head, in a fit of giddiness—and all the other preparations in the kitchen for their dinner.

To-morrow was a bright and peaceful day; and nowhere were the autumn tints more beautifully seen, than from the quiet orchard of the Doctor's house. The snows of many winter nights had melted from that ground, the withered leaves of many summer times had rustled there, since she had fled. The honeysuckle porch was green again, the trees cast bountiful and changing shadows on the grass, the landscape was as tranquil and serene as it had ever been; but where was she!

Not there. Not there. She would have been a stranger sight in her old home now, even than that home had been at first, without her. But a lady sat in the familiar place, from whose heart she had never passed away; in whose true memory she lived, unchanging, youthful, radiant with all promise and all hope; in whose affection—and it was a mother's now: there was a cherished little daughter playing by her side—she had no rival, no successor; upon whose gentle lips her name was trembling then.

The spirit of the lost girl looked out of those eyes. Those eyes of Grace, her sister, sitting with her husband in the orchard, on their wedding-day, and his and Marion's birthday.

He had not become a great man; he had not grown rich; he had not forgotten the scenes and friends of his youth: he had not fulfilled any one of the Doctor's old predictions. But in his useful, patient, unknown visiting of poor men's homes; and in his watching of sick beds; and in his daily knowledge of the gentleness and goodness flowering the bye-paths of the world, not to be trodden down beneath the heavy foot of poverty, but springing up, elastic, in its track, and making its way beautiful; he had better learned and proved, in each succeeding year, the truth of his old faith. The manner of his life, though quiet and remote, had shown him how often men still entertained angels, unawares, as in the olden time; and how the most unlikely forms—even some that were mean and ugly to the view, and poorly clad—became irradiated by the couch of sorrow, want, and pain, and changed to ministering spirits with a glory round their heads.

He lived to better purpose on the altered battle-ground perhaps,

than if he had contended restlessly in more ambitious lists; and h was happy with his wife, dear Grace.

And Marion. Had *he* forgotten her?

"The time has flown, dear Grace," he said, "since then;" th had been talking of that night; "and yet it seems a long long whi ago. We count by changes and events within us. Not by years

"Yet we have years to count by, too, since Marion was wi us," returned Grace. "Six times, dear husband, counting t night as one, we have sat here on her birthday, and spoken togeth of that happy return, so eagerly expected and so long deferre Ah when will it be! When will it be!"

Her husband attentively observed her, as the tears collected i her eyes; and drawing nearer, said:

"But Marion told you, in that farewell letter which she le for you upon your table, love, and which you read so often, th years must pass away before it *could* be. Did she not?"

She took a letter from her breast, and kissed it, and sa "Yes."

"That through those intervening years, however happy s might be, she would look forward to the time when you woul meet again, and all would be made clear: and prayed you, trus fully and hopefully to do the same. The letter runs so, does not, my dear?"

"Yes, Alfred."

"And every other letter she has written since?"

"Except the last—some months ago—in which she spoke you, and what you then knew, and what I was to learn to-night."

He looked towards the sun, then fast declining, and said th the appointed time was sunset.

"Alfred!" said Grace, laying her hand upon his should earnestly, "there is something in this letter—this old letter, whic you say I read so often—that I have never told you. But, t night, dear husband, with that sunset drawing near, and all o life seeming to soften and become hushed with the departing da I cannot keep it secret."

"What is it, love?"

"When Marion went away, she wrote me, here, that you h once left her a sacred trust to me, and that now she left yo Alfred, such a trust in my hands: praying and beseeching me, I loved her, and as I loved you, not to reject the affection sh believed (she knew, she said) you would transfer to me when th new wound was healed, but to encourage and return it."

"—And make me a proud, and happy man again, Grace. Di she say so?"

'She meant, to make myself so blest and honoured in your love," his wife's answer, as he held her in his arms.

'Hear me, my dear!" he said.—"No. Hear me so!"—and e spoke, he gently laid the head she had raised, again upon his ılder. "I know why I have never heard this passage in the er, until now. I know why no trace of it ever showed itself in word or look of yours at that time. I know why Grace, ough so true a friend to me, was hard to win to be my . And knowing it, my own! I know the priceless value he heart I gird within my arms, and thank GOD for the rich ession!"

She wept, but not for sorrow, as he pressed her to his heart. er a brief space, he looked down at the child, who was sitting at r feet, playing with a little basket of flowers, and bade her how golden and how red the sun was.

'Alfred," said Grace, raising her head quickly at these words. ıe sun is going down. You have not forgotten what I am to w before it sets."

'You are to know the truth of Marion's history, my love," he vered.

'All the truth," she said, imploringly. "Nothing veiled ı me, any more. That was the promise. Was it not?"

'It was," he answered.

'Before the sun went down on Marion's birthday. And you it, Alfred? It is sinking fast."

He put his arm about her waist; and, looking steadily into her , rejoined,

'That truth is not reserved so long for me to tell, dear Grace. to come from other lips."

'From other lips!" she faintly echoed.

'Yes. I know your constant heart, I know how brave you I know that to you a word of preparation is enough. You said, truly, that the time is come. It is. Tell me that you present fortitude to bear a trial—a surprise—a shock: and messenger is waiting at the gate."

'What messenger?" she said. "And what intelligence does ring?"

'I am pledged," he answered her, preserving his steady look, say no more. Do you think you understand me?"

'I am afraid to think," she said.

There was that emotion in his face, despite its steady gaze, h frightened her. Again she hid her own face on his shoulder, bling, and entreated him to pause—a moment.

'Courage, my wife! When you have firmness to receive the

messenger, the messenger is waiting at the gate. The sun setting on Marion's birthday. Courage, courage, Grace!"

She raised her head, and, looking at him, told him she w ready. As she stood, and looked upon him going away, her fa was so like Marion's as it had been in her later days at hom that it was wonderful to see. He took the child with him. S called her back—she bore the lost girl's name—and pressed her her bosom. The little creature, being released again, sped af him, and Grace was left alone.

She knew not what she dreaded, or what hoped; but remain there, motionless, looking at the porch by which they had disappear

Ah! what was that, emerging from its shadow; standing its threshold! That figure, with its white garments rustling the evening air; its head laid down upon her father's breast, a pressed against it to his loving heart! Oh, God! was it a vis that came bursting from the old man's arms, and with a cry, a with a waving of its hands, and with a wild precipitation of it upon her in its boundless love, sank down in her embrace!

"Oh, Marion, Marion! Oh, my sister! Oh, my heart's d love! Oh, joy and happiness unutterable, so to meet again!"

It was no dream, no phantom conjured up by hope and fe but Marion, sweet Marion! So beautiful, so happy, so unalloy by care and trial, so elevated and exalted in her loveliness, that the setting sun shone brightly on her upturned face, she mig have been a spirit visiting the earth upon some healing mission.

Clinging to her sister, who had dropped upon a seat, and b down over her: and smiling through her tears, and kneeling, cl before her, with both arms twining round her, and never turni for an instant from her face: and with the glory of the setti sun upon her brow, and with the soft tranquillity of even gathering around them: Marion at length broke silence; her voi so calm, low, clear, and pleasant, well-tuned to the time.

"When this was my dear home, Grace, as it will be n again——"

"Stay, my sweet love! A moment! Oh Marion, to h you speak again."

She could not bear the voice she loved so well, at first.

"When this was my dear home, Grace, as it will be n again, I loved him from my soul. I loved him most devoted I would have died for him, though I was so young. I ne slighted his affection in my secret breast, for one brief instant. was far beyond all price to me. Although it is so long ago, a past and gone, and everything is wholly changed, I could not b to think that you, who love so well, should think I did not tr

namesake here—if Alfred, my kind brother, were not your own ond husband—from whence could I derive the ecstasy I feel to-ight! But as I left here, so I have returned. My heart has nown no other love, my hand has never been bestowed part from it: I am still your maiden sister, unmarried, nbetrothed: your own old oving Marion, in whose ffection you exist alone, and ave no partner, Grace!"

She understood her now. Her face relaxed; sobs ame to her elief; and illing on her eck, she wept nd wept, and ndled her as she were a ild again.

When they ere more mposed, ey found hat the octor, and s sister good unt Martha, re standing ar at hand, ith Alfred.

"This is a ary day for e," said good unt Martha, miling rough her ars, as she braced her ces; "for lose my dear mpanion in king you all happy; and what can you give me in return for Marion?"

"A converted brother," said the Doctor.

"That's something, to be sure," retorted Aunt Martha, "in su a farce as——"

"No, pray don't," said the Doctor penitently.

"Well, I won't," replied Aunt Martha. "But I consider myse ill-used. I don't know what's to become of me without my Mari after we have lived together half-a-dozen years."

"You must come and live here, I suppose," replied the Doct "We shan't quarrel now, Martha."

"Or get married, Aunt," said Alfred.

"Indeed," returned the old lady, "I think it might be a g speculation if I were to set my cap at Michael Warden, who, I be is come home much the better for his absence, in all respects. But I knew him when he was a boy, and I was not a very young wom then, perhaps he mightn't respond. So I'll make up my mind to and live with Marion, when she marries, and until then (it will be very long, I dare say) to live alone. What do *you* say, Brothe

"I've a great mind to say it's a ridiculous world altogether, a there's nothing serious in it," observed the poor old Doctor.

"You might take twenty affidavits of it if you chose, Antho said his sister; "but nobody would believe you with such eyes those."

"It's a world full of hearts," said the Doctor; hugging younger daughter, and bending across her to hug Grace—for couldn't separate the sisters; "and a serious world, with all folly—even with mine, which was enough to have swamped whole globe; and a world on which the sun never rises, but looks upon a thousand bloodless battles that are some set-off agai the miseries and wickedness of Battle-Fields; and a world we m be careful how we libel, Heaven forgive us, for it is a world sacred mysteries, and its Creator only knows what lies beneath surface of His lightest image!"

You would not be the better pleased with my rude pen, if dissected and laid open to your view the transports of this fam long severed and now reunited. Therefore, I will not follow poor Doctor through his humbled recollection of the sorrow he h had, when Marion was lost to him; nor will I tell how serious had found that world to be, in which some love deep-anchored, the portion of all human creatures; nor how such a trifle as absence of one little unit in the great absurd account, had strick him to the ground. Nor how, in compassion for his distress, sister had, long ago, revealed the truth to him by slow degrees; a brought him to the knowledge of the heart of his self-banish daughter, and to that daughter's side.

Nor how Alfred Heathfield had been told the truth, too, in the ourse of that then current year; and Marion had seen him, and ad promised him, as her brother, that on her birthday, in the vening, Grace should know it from her lips at last.

"I beg your pardon, Doctor," said Mr. Snitchey, looking into he orchard, "but have I liberty to come in?"

Without waiting for permission, he came straight to Marion, nd kissed her hand, quite joyfully.

"If Mr. Craggs had been alive, my dear Miss Marion," said Mr. Snitchey, "he would have had great interest in this occasion. t might have suggested to him, Mr. Alfred, that our life is not oo easy, perhaps; that, taken altogether, it will bear any little moothing we can give it; but Mr. Craggs was a man who could ndure to be convinced, Sir. He was always open to conviction. f he were open to conviction, now, I—this is weakness. Mrs. Snitchey, my dear,"—at his summons that lady appeared from ehind the door, "you are among old friends."

Mrs. Snitchey having delivered her congratulations, took her usband aside.

"One moment, Mr. Snitchey," said that lady. "It is not in ny nature to rake up the ashes of the departed."

"No my dear," returned her husband.

"Mr. Craggs is——"

"Yes, my dear, he is deceased," said Mr. Snitchey.

"But I ask you if you recollect," pursued his wife, "that vening of the ball. I only ask you that. If you do; and if our memory has not entirely failed you, Mr. Snitchey; and if ou are not absolutely in your dotage; I ask you to connect this ime with that—to remember how I begged and prayed you, on ny knees——"

"Upon your knees, my dear?" said Mr. Snitchey.

"Yes," said Mrs. Snitchey, confidently, "and you know it—to eware of that man—to observe his eye—and now to tell me whether I was right, and whether at that moment he knew secrets hich he didn't choose to tell."

"Mrs. Snitchey," returned her husband, in her ear, "Madam. Did you ever observe anything in *my* eye?"

"No," said Mrs. Snitchey, sharply. "Don't flatter yourelf."

"Because, Ma'am, that night," he continued, twitching her by he sleeve, "it happens that we both knew secrets which we didn't hoose to tell, and both knew just the same, professionally. And o the less you say about such things the better, Mrs. Snitchey; nd take this as a warning to have wiser and more charitable eyes

another time. Miss Marion, I brought a friend of yours alon with me. Here! Mistress."

Poor Clemency, with her apron to her eyes, came slowly i escorted by her husband; the latter doleful with the presentimen that if she abandoned herself to grief, The Nutmeg Grater wa done for.

"Now, Mistress," said the lawyer, checking Marion as she ra towards her, and interposing himself between them, "what's th matter with *you?*"

"The matter!" cried poor Clemency.

When, looking up in wonder, and in indignant remonstranc and in the added emotion of a great roar from Mr. Britain, an seeing that sweet face so well-remembered close before her, sh stared, sobbed, laughed, cried, screamed, embraced her, held he fast, released her, fell on Mr. Snitchey and embraced him (muc to Mrs. Snitchey's indignation), fell on the Doctor and embrace him, fell on Mr. Britain and embraced him, and concluded b embracing herself, throwing her apron over her head, and goin into hysterics behind it.

A stranger had come into the orchard, after Mr. Snitchey, an had remained apart, near the gate, without being observed by an of the group; for they had little spare attention to bestow, an that had been monopolised by the ecstasies of Clemency. He di not appear to wish to be observed, but stood alone, with downcas eyes; and there was an air of dejection about him (though he wa a gentleman of a gallant appearance) which the general happines rendered more remarkable.

None but the quick eyes of Aunt Martha, however, remarke him at all; but almost as soon as she espied him, she was in con versation with him. Presently, going to where Marion stood wit Grace and her little namesake, she whispered something i Marion's ear, at which she started, and appeared surprised; bu soon recovering from her confusion, she timidly approached th stranger, in Aunt Martha's company, and engaged in conversatio with him too.

"Mr. Britain," said the lawyer, putting his hand in his pocke and bringing out a legal-looking document, while this was going on "I congratulate you. You are now the whole and sole proprieto of that freehold tenement, at present occupied and held by yourse as a licensed tavern, or house of public entertainment, an commonly called or known by the sign of The Nutmeg Grate Your wife lost one house, through my client Mr. Michael Warden and now gains another. I shall have the pleasure of canvassin you for the county, one of these fine mornings."

"Would it make any difference in the vote if the sign was altered, Sir?" asked Britain.

"Not in the least," replied the lawyer.

"Then," said Mr. Britain, handing him back the conveyance, "just clap in the words, 'and Thimble,' will you be so good; and I'll have the two mottoes painted up in the parlour, instead of my wife's portrait."

"And let me," said a voice behind them; it was the stranger's —Michael Warden's; "let me claim the benefit of those inscriptions. Mr. Heathfield and Doctor Jeddler, I might have deeply wronged you both. That I did not, is no virtue of my own. I will not say that I am six years wiser than I was, or better. But I have known, at any rate, that term of self-reproach. I can urge no reason why you should deal gently with me. I abused the hospitality of this house; and learnt my own demerits, with a shame I never have forgotten, yet with some profit too I would fain hope, from one," he glanced at Marion, "to whom I made my humble supplication for forgiveness, when I knew her merit and my deep unworthiness. In a few days I shall quit this place for ever. I entreat your pardon. Do as you would be done by! Forget, and forgive!"

TIME—from whom I had the latter portion of this story, and with whom I have the pleasure of a personal acquaintance of some five-and-thirty-years' duration—informed me, leaning easily upon his scythe, that Michael Warden never went away again, and never sold his house, but opened it afresh, maintained a golden mean of hospitality, and had a wife, the pride and honour of that country-side, whose name was Marion. But as I have observed that Time confuses facts occasionally, I hardly know what weight to give to his authority.

THE HAUNTED MAN

AND

The Ghost's Bargain.

A FANCY FOR CHRISTMAS-TIME.

The Haunted Man

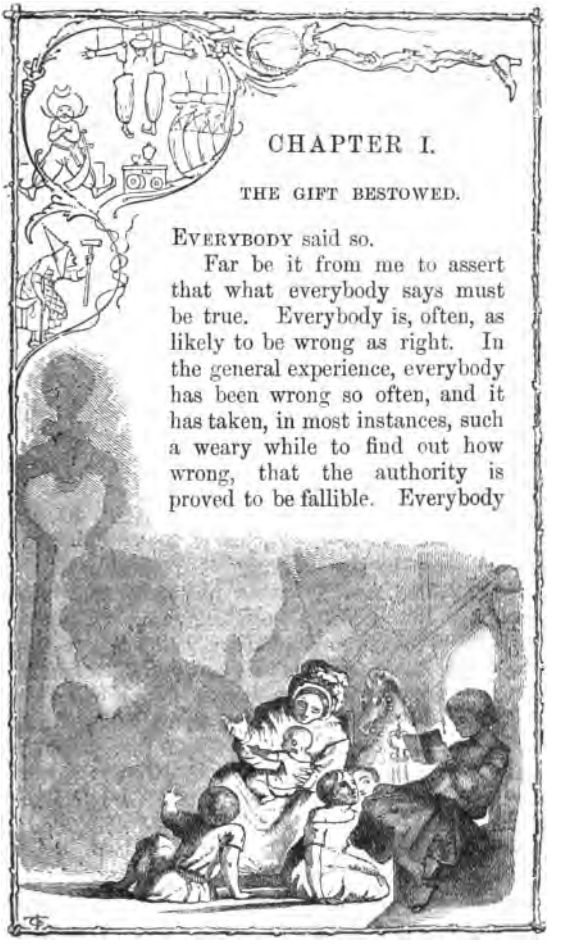
AND

The Ghost's Bargain

THE HAUNTED MAN

AND

The Ghost's Bargain.



CHAPTER I.

THE GIFT BESTOWED.

EVERYBODY said so.

Far be it from me to assert that what everybody says must be true. Everybody is, often, as likely to be wrong as right. In the general experience, everybody has been wrong so often, and it has taken, in most instances, such a weary while to find out how wrong, that the authority is proved to be fallible. Everybody

may sometimes be right; "but *that's* no rule," as the ghost of Gil Scroggins says in the ballad.

The dread word, GHOST, recalls me.

Everybody said he looked like a haunted man. The extent my present claim for everybody is, that they were so far righ He did.

Who could have seen his hollow cheek; his sunken brillia eye; his black-attired figure, indefinably grim, although well-kn and well-proportioned; his grizzled hair hanging, like tangl sea-weed, about his face,—as if he had been, through his who life, a lonely mark for the chafing and beating of the great deep humanity,—but might have said he looked like a haunted man?

Who could have observed his manner, taciturn, thoughtfu gloomy, shadowed by habitual reserve, retiring always and jocun never, with a distraught air of reverting to a bygone place a time, or of listening to some old echoes in his mind, but migh have said it was the manner of a haunted man?

Who could have heard his voice, slow-speaking, deep, a grave, with a natural fulness and melody in it which he seemed set himself against and stop, but might have said it was the voi of a haunted man?

Who that had seen him in his inner chamber, part library a part laboratory,—for he was, as the world knew, far and wide, learned man in chemistry, and a teacher on whose lips and han a crowd of aspiring ears and eyes hung daily,—who that had se him there, upon a winter night, alone, surrounded by his dru and instruments and books; the shadow of his shaded lamp monstrous beetle on the wall, motionless among a crowd of spectr shapes raised there by the flickering of the fire upon the quai objects around him; some of these phantoms (the reflection glass vessels that held liquids), trembling at heart like things th knew his power to uncombine them, and to give back the component parts to fire and vapour;—who that had seen hi then, his work done, and he pondering in his chair before th rusted grate and red flame, moving his thin mouth as if in speec but silent as the dead, would not have said that the man seeme haunted and the chamber too?

Who might not, by a very easy flight of fancy, have believe that everything about him took this haunted tone, and that h lived on haunted ground?

His dwelling was so solitary and vault-like,—an old, retire part of an ancient endowment for students, once a brave edifice planted in an open place, but now the obsolete whim of forgotte architects; smoke-age-and-weather-darkened, squeezed on ever

side by the overgrowing of the great city, and choked, like an old well, with stones and bricks; its small quadrangles, lying down in very pits formed by the streets and buildings, which, in course of time, had been constructed above its heavy chimney stacks; its old trees, insulted by the neighbouring smoke, which deigned to droop so low when it was very feeble and the weather very moody; its grass-plots, struggling with the mildewed earth to be grass, or to win any show of compromise; its silent pavements, unaccustomed to the tread of feet, and even to the observation of eyes, except when a stray face looked down from the upper world, wondering what nook it was; its sun-dial in a little bricked-up corner, where no sun had straggled for a hundred years, but where, in compensation for the sun's neglect, the snow would lie for weeks when it lay nowhere else, and the black east wind would spin like a huge humming-top, when in all other places it was silent and still.

His dwelling, at its heart and core—within doors—at his fireside—was so lowering and old, so crazy, yet so strong, with its worm-eaten beams of wood in the ceiling, and its sturdy floor shelving downward to the great oak chimney-piece; so environed and hemmed in by the pressure of the town, yet so remote in fashion, age, and custom; so quiet, yet so thundering with echoes when a distant voice was raised or a door was shut,—echoes, not confined to the many low passages and empty rooms, but rumbling and grumbling till they were stifled in the heavy air of the forgotten Crypt where the Norman arches were half-buried in the earth.

You should have seen him in his dwelling about twilight, in the dead winter time.

When the wind was blowing, shrill and shrewd, with the going down of the blurred sun. When it was just so dark, as that the forms of things were indistinct and big—but not wholly lost. When sitters by the fire began to see wild faces and figures, mountains and abysses, ambuscades and armies, in the coals. When people in the streets bent down their heads and ran before the weather. When those who were obliged to meet it, were stopped at angry corners, stung by wandering snow-flakes alighting on the lashes of their eyes,—which fell too sparingly, and were blown away too quickly, to leave a trace upon the frozen ground. When windows of private houses closed up tight and warm. When lighted gas began to burst forth in the busy and the quiet streets, fast blackening otherwise. When stray pedestrians, shivering along the latter, looked down at the glowing fires in kitchens, and sharpened their sharp appetites by sniffing up the fragrance of whole miles of dinners.

When travellers by land were bitter cold, and looked weari
on gloomy landscapes, rustling and shuddering in the blast. Wh
mariners at sea, outlying upon icy yards, were tossed and swu

above the howling ocean dreadfully. When lighthouses, on roc
and headlands, showed solitary and watchful; and benighted se
birds breasted on against their ponderous lanterns, and fell dea

Then little readers of story-books, by the firelight, trembled to
ink of Cassim Baba cut into quarters, hanging in the Robbers'
ave, or had some small misgivings that the fierce little old
oman, with the crutch, who used to start out of the box in the
erchant Abudah's bedroom, might, one of these nights, be found
on the stairs, in the long, cold, dusky journey up to bed.

When, in rustic places, the last glimmering of daylight died
way from the ends of avenues; and the trees, arching over-
ead, were sullen and black. When, in parks and woods, the high
et fern and sodden moss, and beds of fallen leaves, and trunks
trees, were lost to view, in masses of impenetrable shade.
hen mists arose from dyke, and fen, and river. When lights in
d halls and in cottage windows, were a cheerful sight. When
e mill stopped, the wheelwright and the blacksmith shut their
orkshops, the turnpike-gate closed, the plough and harrow were
ft lonely in the fields, the labourer and team went home, and
e striking of the church clock had a deeper sound than at noon,
d the churchyard wicket would be swung no more that night.

When twilight everywhere released the shadows, prisoned up
day, that now closed in and gathered like mustering swarms of
osts. When they stood lowering, in corners of rooms, and
owned out from behind half-opened doors. When they had full
session of unoccupied apartments. When they danced upon the
ors, and walls, and ceilings of inhabited chambers, while the fire
s low, and withdrew like ebbing waters when it sprang into a
aze. When they fantastically mocked the shapes of household
jects, making the nurse an ogress, the rocking-horse a monster,
e wondering child, half-scared and half-amused, a stranger to
elf,—the very tongs upon the hearth, a straddling giant with his
ms a-kimbo, evidently smelling the blood of Englishmen. and
nting to grind people's bones to make his bread.

When these shadows brought into the minds of older people,
her thoughts, and showed them different images. When they
le from their retreats, in the likenesses of forms and faces from
e past, from the grave, from the deep, deep gulf, where the things
at might have been, and never were, are always wandering.

When he sat, as already mentioned, gazing at the fire. When,
it rose and fell, the shadows went and came. When he took no
ed of them, with his bodily eyes; but, let them come or let them
, looked fixedly at the fire. You should have seen him, then.

When the sounds that had arisen with the shadows, and come
t of their lurking-places at the twilight summons, seemed to
ke a deeper stillness all about him. When the wind was
mbling in the chimney, and sometimes crooning, sometimes

howling, in the house. When the old trees outside were so shak
and beaten, that one querulous old rook, unable to sleep, protest
now and then, in a feeble, dozy, high-up "Caw!" When,
intervals, the window trembled, the rusty vane upon the turret-t
complained, the clock beneath it recorded that another quarter
an hour was gone, or the fire collapsed and fell in with a rattle.

—When a knock came at his door, in short, as he was sitti
so, and roused him.

"Who's that?" said he. "Come in!"

Surely there had been no figure leaning on the back of his cha
no face looking over it. It is certain that no gliding foots
touched the floor, as he lifted up his head, with a start, and spok
And yet there was no mirror in the room on whose surface his o
form could have cast its shadow for a moment; and Something h
passed darkly and gone!

"I'm humbly fearful, Sir," said a fresh-coloured busy m
holding the door open with his foot for the admission of hims
and a wooden tray he carried, and letting it go again by very gen
and careful degrees, when he and the tray had got in, lest it shou
close noisily, "that it's a good bit past the time to-night. B
Mrs. William has been taken off her legs so often——"

"By the wind? Ay! I have heard it rising."

"—By the wind, Sir—that it's a mercy she got home at
Oh dear, yes. Yes. It was by the wind, Mr. Redlaw. By t
wind."

He had, by this time, put down the tray for dinner, and
employed in lighting the lamp, and spreading a cloth on the tab
From this employment he desisted in a hurry, to stir and feed t
fire, and then resumed it; the lamp he had lighted, and the bl
that rose under his hand, so quickly changing the appearance
the room, that it seemed as if the mere coming in of his fresh
face and active manner had made the pleasant alteration.

"Mrs. William is of course subject at any time, Sir, to be tak
off her balance by the elements. She is not formed superior
that."

"No," returned Mr. Redlaw good-naturedly, though abruptly

"No, Sir. Mrs. William may be taken off her balance
Earth; as for example, last Sunday week, when sloppy and grea
and she going out to tea with her newest sister-in-law, and havi
a pride in herself, and wishing to appear perfectly spotless thou
pedestrian. Mrs. William may be taken off her balance by Ai
as being once over-persuaded by a friend to try a swing at Peckha
Fair, which acted on her constitution instantly like a steam-bo
Mrs. William may be taken off her balance by Fire; as on a fa

alarm of engines at her mother's, when she went two miles in her nightcap. Mrs. William may be taken off her balance by Water; as at Battersea, when rowed into the piers by her young nephew, Charley Swidger junior, aged twelve, which had no idea of boats whatever. But these are elements. Mrs. William must be taken out of elements for the strength of *her* character to come into play."

As he stopped for a reply, the reply was "Yes," in the same tone as before.

"Yes, Sir. Oh dear, yes!" said Mr. Swidger, still proceeding with his preparations, and checking them off as he made them. "That's where it is, Sir. That's what I always say myself, Sir. Such a many of us Swidgers!—Pepper. Why there's my father, Sir, superannuated keeper and custodian of this Institution, eigh-ty-seven year old. He's a Swidger!—Spoon."

"True, William," was the patient and abstracted answer, when he stopped again.

"Yes, Sir," said Mr. Swidger. "That's what I always say, Sir. You may call him the trunk of the tree!—Bread. Then you come to his successor, my unworthy self—Salt—and Mrs. William, Swidgers both.—Knife and fork. Then you come to all my brothers and their families, Swidgers, man and woman, boy and girl. Why, what with cousins, uncles, aunts, and relationships of this, that, and t'other degree, and what-not degree, and marriages, and lyings-in, the Swidgers—Tumbler—might take hold of hands, and make a ring round England!"

Receiving no reply at all here, from the thoughtful man whom he addressed, Mr. William approached him nearer, and made a feint of accidentally knocking the table with a decanter, to rouse him. The moment he succeeded, he went on, as if in great alacrity of acquiescence.

"Yes, Sir! That's just what I say myself, Sir. Mrs. William and me have often said so. 'There's Swidgers enough,' we say, 'without *our* voluntary contributions,'—Butter. In fact, Sir, my father is a family in himself—Castors—to take care of; and it happens all for the best that we have no child of our own, though it's made Mrs. William rather quiet-like, too. Quite ready for the fowl and mashed potatoes, Sir? Mrs. William said she'd dish in ten minutes when I left the Lodge."

"I am quite ready," said the other, waking as from a dream, and walking slowly to and fro.

"Mrs. William has been at it again, Sir!" said the keeper, as he stood warming a plate at the fire, and pleasantly shading his face with it. Mr. Redlaw stopped in his walking, and an expression of interest appeared in him.

exactly what I say myself, Sir. There never was such a memo as my father's. He's the most wonderful man in the world. H don't know what forgetting means. It's the very observation I'l always making to Mrs. William, Sir, if you'll believe me!"

Mr. Swidger, in his polite desire to seem to acquiesce at all events, delivered this as if there were no iota of contradiction in it, and it were all said in unbounded and unqualified assent.

The Chemist pushed his plate away, and, rising from the table, walked across the room to where the old man stood looking at a little sprig of holly in his hand.

"It recalls the time when many of those years were old and new, then?" he said, observing him attentively, and touching him on the shoulder. "Does it?"

"Oh many, many!" said Philip, half awaking from his reverie. "I'm eighty-seven!"

"Merry and happy, was it?" asked the Chemist in a low voice. "Merry and happy, old man?"

"Maybe as high as that, no higher," said the old man, holding out his hand a little way above the level of his knee, and looking retrospectively at his questioner, "when I first remember 'em! Cold, sunshiny day it was, out a-walking, when some one — it was my mother as sure as you stand there, though I don't know what h blessed face was like, for she took ill and died that Christma time—told me they were food for birds. The pretty little fello thought—that's me, you understand—that birds' eyes were bright, perhaps, because the berries that they lived on in th

winter were so bright. I recollect that. And I'm eighty-seven!"

"Merry and happy!" mused the other, bending his dark eyes upon the stooping figure, with a smile of compassion. "Merry and happy—and remember well?"

"Ay, ay, ay!" resumed the old man, catching the last words. "I remember 'em well in my school time, year after year, and all the merry-making that used to come along with them. I was a strong chap then, Mr. Redlaw; and, if you'll believe me, hadn't my match at football within ten mile. Where's my son William? Hadn't my match at football, William, within ten mile!"

"That's what I always say, father!" returned the son promptly, and with great respect. "You ARE a Swidger, if ever there was one of the family!"

"Dear!" said the old man, shaking his head as he again looked at the holly. "His mother—my son William's my youngest son—and I, have sat among 'em all, boys and girls, little children and babies, many a year, when the berries like these were not shining half so bright all round us, as their bright faces. Many of 'em are gone; she's gone; and my son George (our eldest, who was her pride more than all the rest!) is fallen very low: but I can see them, when I look here, alive and healthy, as they used to be in those days; and I can see him, thank God, in his innocence. It's a blessed thing to me, at eighty-seven."

The keen look that had been fixed upon him with so much earnestness, had gradually sought the ground.

"When my circumstances got to be not so good as formerly, through not being honestly dealt by, and I first come here to be custodian," said the old man, "—which was upwards of fifty years ago—where's my son William? More than half a century ago, William!"

"That's what I say, father," replied the son, as promptly and dutifully as before, "that's exactly where it is. Two times ought's an ought, and twice five ten, and there's a hundred of 'em."

"It was quite a pleasure to know that one of our founders—or more correctly speaking," said the old man, with a great glory in his subject and his knowledge of it, "one of the learned gentlemen that helped endow us in Queen Elizabeth's time, for we were founded afore her day—left in his will, among the other bequests he made us, so much to buy holly, for garnishing the walls and windows, come Christmas. There was something homely and friendly in it. Being but strange here, then, and coming at Christmas time, we took a liking for his very picter that hangs in what used to be, anciently, afore our ten poor gentlemen commuted

for an annual stipend in money, our great Dinner Hall.—A sedate gentleman in a peaked beard, with a ruff round his neck, and a scroll below him, in old English letters, 'Lord! keep my memory green!' You know all about him, Mr. Redlaw?"

"I know the portrait hangs there, Philip."

"Yes, sure, it's the second on the right, above the panelling. I was going to say—he has helped to keep *my* memory green, I thank him; for going round the building every year, as I'm a doing now, and freshening up the bare rooms with these branches and berries, freshens up my bare old brain. One year brings back another, and that year another, and those others numbers! At last, it seems to me as if the birth-time of our Lord was the birth-time of all I have ever had affection for, or mourned for, or delighted in,—and they're a pretty many, for I'm eighty-seven!"

"Merry and happy," murmured Redlaw to himself.

The room began to darken strangely.

"So you see, Sir," pursued old Philip, whose hale wintry cheek had warmed into a ruddier glow, and whose blue eyes had brightened while he spoke, "I have plenty to keep, when I keep this present season. Now, where's my quiet Mouse? Chattering of the sin of my time of life, and there's half the building to do yet, if the cold don't freeze us first, or the wind don't blow us away, or the darkness don't swallow us up."

The quiet Mouse had brought her calm face to his side, and silently taken his arm, before he finished speaking.

"Come away, my dear," said the old man. "Mr. Redlaw won't settle to his dinner, otherwise, till it's cold as the winter. I hope you'll excuse me rambling on, Sir, and I wish you good night, and, once again, a merry——"

"Stay!" said Mr. Redlaw, resuming his place at the table. more, it would have seemed from his manner, to reassure the old keeper, than in any remembrance of his own appetite. "Spare me another moment, Philip. William, you were going to tell me something to your excellent wife's honour. It will not be displeasing to her to hear you praise her. What was it?"

"Why, that's where it is, you see, Sir," returned Mr. William Swidger, looking towards his wife in considerable embarrassment. "Mrs. William's got her eye upon me."

"But you're not afraid of Mrs. William's eye?"

"Why, no, Sir," returned Mr. Swidger, "that's what I say myself. It wasn't made to be afraid of. It wouldn't have been made so mild, if that was the intention. But I wouldn't like to —Milly!—him, you know. Down in the Buildings."

Mr. William, standing behind the table, and rummaging dis-

concertedly among the objects upon it, directed persuasive glances at Mrs. William, and secret jerks of his head and thumb at Mr. Redlaw, as alluring her towards him.

"Him, you know, my love," said Mr. William. "Down in the Buildings. Tell, my dear! You're the works of Shakespeare in comparison with myself. Down in the Buildings, you know, my love.—Student."

"Student?" repeated Mr. Redlaw, raising his head.

"That's what I say, Sir!" cried Mr. William, in the utmost animation of assent. "If it wasn't the poor student down in the Buildings, why should you wish to hear it from Mrs. William's lips? Mrs. William, my dear—Buildings."

"I didn't know," said Milly, with a quiet frankness, free from any haste or confusion, "that William had said anything about it, or I wouldn't have come. I asked him not to. It's a sick young gentleman, Sir—and very poor, I am afraid—who is too ill to go home this holiday-time, and lives, unknown to any one, in but a common kind of lodging for a gentleman, down in Jerusalem Buildings. That's all, Sir."

"Why have I never heard of him?" said the Chemist, rising hurriedly. "Why has he not made his situation known to me? Sick!—give me my hat and cloak. Poor!—what house?—what number?"

"Oh, you mustn't go there, Sir," said Milly, leaving her father-in-law, and calmly confronting him with her collected little face and folded hands.

"Not go there?"

"Oh dear, no!" said Milly, shaking her head as at a most manifest and self-evident impossibility. "It couldn't be thought of!"

"What do you mean? Why not?"

"Why, you see, Sir," said Mr. William Swidger, persuasively and confidentially, "that's what I say. Depend upon it, the young gentleman would never have made his situation known to one of his own sex. Mrs. William has got into his confidence, but that's quite different. They all confide in Mrs. William; they all trust *her*. A man, Sir, couldn't have got a whisper out of him; but woman, Sir, and Mrs. William combined——!"

"There is good sense and delicacy in what you say, William," returned Mr. Redlaw, observant of the gentle and composed face at his shoulder. And laying his finger on his lip, he secretly put his purse into her hand.

"Oh dear no, Sir!" cried Milly, giving it back again. "Worse and worse! Couldn't be dreamed of!"

Such a staid matter-of-fact housewife she was, and so unruffled by the momentary haste of this rejection, that, an instant afterwards, she was tidily picking up a few leaves which had strayed from between her scissors and her apron, when she had arranged the holly.

Finding, when she rose from her stooping posture, that Mr. Redlaw was still regarding her with doubt and astonishment, she quietly repeated—looking about, the while, for any other fragments that might have escaped her observation:

"Oh dear no, Sir! He said that of all the world he would not be known to you, or receive help from you—though he is a student in your class. I have made no terms of secrecy with you, but I trust to your honour completely."

"Why did he say so?"

"Indeed I can't tell, Sir," said Milly, after thinking a little; "because I am not at all clever, you know; and I wanted to be useful to him in making things neat and comfortable about him, and employed myself that way. But I know he is poor, and lonely, and I think he is somehow neglected too.—How dark it is!"

The room had darkened more and more. There was a very heavy gloom and shadow gathering behind the Chemist's chair.

"What more about him?" he asked.

"He is engaged to be married when he can afford it," said Milly, "and is studying, I think, to qualify himself to earn a living. I have seen, a long time, that he has studied hard and denied himself much.—How very dark it is!"

"It's turned colder, too," said the old man, rubbing his hands. "There's a chill and dismal feeling in the room. Where's my son William? William, my boy, turn the lamp, and rouse the fire!"

Milly's voice resumed, like quiet music very softly played:

"He muttered in his broken sleep yesterday afternoon, after talking to me" (this was to herself) "about some one dead, and some great wrong done that could never be forgotten; but whether to him or to another person, I don't know. Not *by* him, I am sure."

"And, in short, Mrs. William, you see—which she wouldn't say herself, Mr. Redlaw, if she was to stop here till the new year after this next one—" said Mr. William, coming up to him to speak in his ear, "has done him worlds of good! Bless you, worlds of good! All at home just the same as ever—my father made as snug and comfortable—not a crumb of litter to be found in the house, if you were to offer fifty pound ready money for it—Mrs. William apparently never out of the way—yet Mrs. William

ackwards and forwards, backwards and forwards, up and down, p and down, a mother to him!"

The room turned darker and colder, and the gloom and shadow athering behind the chair was heavier.

"Not content with this, Sir, Mrs. William goes and finds, this ery night, when she was coming home (why it's not above a ouple of hours ago), a creature more like a young wild beast than young child, shivering upon a door-step. What does Mrs. William o, but brings it home to dry it, and feed it, and keep it till our ld Bounty of food and flannel is given away, on Christmas morn- ng! If it ever felt a fire before, it's as much as ever it did; for t's sitting in the old Lodge chimney, staring at ours as if its avenous eyes would never shut again. It's sitting there, at east," said Mr. William, correcting himself, on reflection, "unless t's bolted!"

"Heaven keep her happy!" said the Chemist aloud, "and you oo, Philip! and you, William! I must consider what to do in his. I may desire to see this student, I'll not detain you longer ow. Good night!"

"I thank'ee, Sir, I thank'ee!" said the old man, "for Mouse, nd for my son William, and for myself. Where's my son William? William, you take the lantern and go on first, through hem long dark passages, as you did last year and the year afore. Ha ha! *I* remember—though I'm eighty-seven! 'Lord keep my nemory green!' It's a very good prayer, Mr. Redlaw, that of he learned gentleman in the peaked beard, with a ruff round his eck—hangs up, second on the right above the panelling, in what sed to be, afore our ten poor gentlemen commuted, our great Dinner Hall. 'Lord keep my memory green!' It's very good nd pious, Sir. Amen! Amen!"

As they passed out and shut the heavy door, which, however carefully withheld, fired a long train of thundering reverberations when it shut at last, the room turned darker.

As he fell a musing in his chair alone, the healthy holly withered on the wall, and dropped—dead branches.

As the gloom and shadow thickened behind him, in that place where it had been gathering so darkly, it took, by slow degrees,—or out of it there came, by some unreal, unsubstantial process—not to be traced by any human sense,—an awful likeness of himself!

Ghastly and cold, colourless in its leaden face and hands, but with his features, and his bright eyes, and his grizzled hair, and dressed in the gloomy shadow of his dress, it came into his terrible appearance of existence, motionless, without a sound. As *he*

leaned his arm upon the elbow of his chair, ruminating before the fire, *it* leaned upon the chair-back, close above him, with its

appalling copy of his face looking where his face looked, and bearing the expression his face bore.

This, then, was the Something that had passed and gone already. This was the dread companion of the haunted man!

It took, for some moments, no more apparent heed of him,

han he of it. The Christmas Waits were playing somewhere in he distance, and, through his thoughtfulness, he seemed to listen o the music. It seemed to listen too.

At length he spoke; without moving or lifting up his face.

"Here again!" he said.

"Here again," replied the Phantom.

"I see you in the fire," said the haunted man; "I hear you in nusic, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night."

The Phantom moved its head, assenting.

"Why do you come, to haunt me thus?"

"I come as I am called," replied the Ghost.

"No. Unbidden," exclaimed the Chemist.

"Unbidden be it," said the Spectre. "It is enough. I am ere."

Hitherto the light of the fire had shone on the two faces—if he dread lineaments behind the chair might be called a face—oth addressed towards it, as at first, and neither looking at the ther. But, now, the haunted man turned, suddenly, and stared pon the Ghost. The Ghost, as sudden in its motion, passed to efore the chair, and stared on him.

The living man, and the animated image of himself dead, might o have looked, the one upon the other. An awful survey, in a nely and remote part of an empty old pile of building, on a inter night, with the loud wind going by upon its journey of ystery—whence, or whither, no man knowing since the world egan—and the stars, in unimaginable millions, glittering through , from eternal space, where the world's bulk is as a grain, and its oary age is infancy.

"Look upon me!" said the Spectre. "I am he, neglected in y youth, and miserably poor, who strove and suffered, and still trove and suffered, until I hewed out knowledge from the mine here it was buried, and made rugged steps thereof, for my worn eet to rest and rise on."

"I *am* that man," returned the Chemist.

"No mother's self-denying love," pursued the Phantom, "no ather's counsel, aided *me*. A stranger came into my father's place hen I was but a child, and I was easily an alien from my nother's heart. My parents, at the best, were of that sort whose are soon ends, and whose duty is soon done; who cast their off-pring loose, early, as birds do theirs; and, if they do well, claim ne merit; and, if ill, the pity."

It paused, and seemed to tempt and goad him with its look, nd with the manner of its speech, and with its smile.

"I am he," pursued the Phantom, "who, in this struggle

upward, found a friend. I made him—won him—bound him to me! We worked together, side by side. All the love and confidence that in my earlier youth had had no outlet, and found no expression, I bestowed on him."

"Not all," said Redlaw, hoarsely.

"No, not all," returned the Phantom. "I had a sister."

The haunted man, with his head resting on his hands, replied "I had!" The Phantom, with an evil smile, drew closer to the chair, and resting its chin upon its folded hands, its folded hands upon the back, and looking down into his face with searching eyes that seemed instinct with fire, went on:

"Such glimpses of the light of home as I had ever known, had streamed from her. How young she was, how fair, how loving! I took her to the first poor roof that I was master of, and made it rich. She came into the darkness of my life, and made it bright—She is before me!"

"I saw her, in the fire, but now. I hear her in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night," returned the haunted man.

"*Did* he love her?" said the Phantom, echoing his contemplative tone. "I think he did, once. I am sure he did. Better had she loved him less—less secretly, less dearly, from the shallower depths of a more divided heart!"

"Let me forget it!" said the Chemist, with an angry motion of his hand. "Let me blot it from my memory!"

The Spectre, without stirring, and with its unwinking, cruel eyes still fixed upon his face, went on:

"A dream, like hers, stole upon my own life."

"It did," said Redlaw.

"A love, as like hers," pursued the Phantom, "as my inferior nature might cherish, arose in my own heart. I was too poor to bind its object to my fortune then, by any thread of promise or entreaty. I loved her far too well, to seek to do it. But, more than ever I had striven in my life, I strove to climb! Only an inch gained, brought me something nearer to the height. I toiled up! In the late pauses of my labour at that time,—my sister (sweet companion!) still sharing with me the expiring ember and the cooling hearth,—when day was breaking, what pictures of the future did I see!"

"I saw them, in the fire, but now," he murmured. "They come back to me in music, in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night, in the revolving years."

"—Pictures of my own domestic life, in after-time, with her who was the inspiration of my toil. Pictures of my sister, made

the wife of my dear friend, on equal terms—for he had some inheritance, we none—pictures of our sobered age and mellowed happiness, and of the golden links, extending back so far, that should bind us, and our children, in a radiant garland," said the Phantom.

"Pictures," said the haunted man, "that were delusions. Why is it my doom to remember them too well!"

"Delusions," echoed the Phantom in its changeless voice, and glaring on him with its changeless eyes. "For my friend (in whose breast my confidence was locked as in my own), passing between me and the centre of the system of my hopes and struggles, won her to himself, and shattered my frail universe. My sister, doubly dear, doubly devoted, doubly cheerful in my home, lived on to see me famous, and my old ambition so rewarded when its spring was broken, and then——"

"Then died," he interposed. "Died, gentle as ever; happy; and with no concern but for her brother. Peace!"

The Phantom watched him silently.

"Remembered!" said the haunted man, after a pause. "Yes. So well remembered, that even now, when years have passed, and nothing is more idle or more visionary to me than the boyish love so long outlived, I think of it with sympathy, as if it were a younger brother's or a son's. Sometimes I even wonder when her heart first inclined to him, and how it had been affected towards me.—Not lightly, once, I think.—But that is nothing. Early unhappiness, a wound from a hand I loved and trusted, and a loss that nothing can replace, outlive such fancies."

"Thus," said the Phantom, "I bear within me a Sorrow and a Wrong. Thus I prey upon myself. Thus, memory is my curse; and, if I could forget my sorrow and my wrong, I would!"

"Mocker!" said the Chemist, leaping up, and making, with a wrathful hand, at the throat of his other self. "Why have I always that taunt in my ears?"

"Forbear!" exclaimed the Spectre in an awful voice. "Lay a hand on Me, and die!"

He stopped midway, as if its words had paralysed him, and stood looking on it. It had glided from him; it had its arm raised high in warning; and a smile passed over its unearthly features, as it reared its dark figure in triumph.

"If I could forget my sorrow and wrong, I would," the Ghost repeated. "If I could forget my sorrow and my wrong, I would!"

"Evil spirit of myself," returned the haunted man, in a low, trembling tone, "my life is darkened by that incessant whisper."

"It is an echo," said the Phantom.

"If it be an echo of my thoughts—as now, indeed, I know i is," rejoined the haunted man, "why should I, therefore, b tormented? It is not a selfish thought. I suffer it to rang beyond myself. All men and women have their sorrows,—most o them their wrongs; ingratitude, and sordid jealousy, and interest besetting all degrees of life. Who would not forget their sorrow and their wrongs?"

"Who would not, truly, and be the happier and better for it? said the Phantom.

"These revolutions of years, which we commemorate," proceede Redlaw, "what do *they* recall! Are there any minds in whic they do not re-awaken some sorrow, or some trouble? What i the remembrance of the old man who was here to-night? A tissu of sorrow and trouble."

"But common natures," said the Phantom, with its evil smil upon its glassy face, "unenlightened minds and ordinary spirits, d not feel or reason on these things like men of higher cultivatio and profounder thought."

"Tempter," answered Redlaw, "whose hollow look and voice dread more than words can express, and from whom some dir foreshadowing of greater fear is stealing over me while I speak. hear again an echo of my own mind."

"Receive it as a proof that I am powerful," returned the Ghos "Hear what I offer! Forget the sorrow, wrong, and trouble yo have known!"

"Forget them!" he repeated.

"I have the power to cancel their remembrance—to leave be very faint, confused traces of them, that will die out soon," returne the Spectre. "Say! Is it done?"

"Stay!" cried the haunted man, arresting by a terrified gestur the uplifted hand. "I tremble with distrust and doubt of you and the dim fear you cast upon me deepens into a nameless horro I can hardly bear.—I would not deprive myself of any kindl recollection, or any sympathy that is good for me, or other What shall I lose, if I assent to this? What else will pass fro my remembrance?"

"No knowledge; no result of study; nothing but the inte twisted chain of feelings and associations, each in its turn dependen on, and nourished by, the banished recollections. Those will go."

"Are they so many?" said the haunted man, reflecting i alarm.

"They have been wont to show themselves in the fire, in musi in the wind, in the dead stillness of the night, in the revolvin years," returned the Phantom scornfully.

"In nothing else?"

The Phantom held its peace.

But having stood before him, silent, for a little while, it moved wards the fire; then stopped.

"Decide!" it said, "before the opportunity is lost!"

"A moment! I call Heaven to witness," said the agitated an, "that I have never been a hater of my kind,—never morose, different, or hard, to anything around me. If, living here alone, have made too much of all that was and might have been, and little of what is, the evil, I believe, has fallen on me, and not others. But, if there were poison in my body, should I not, ssessed of antidotes and knowledge how to use them, use them? there be poison in my mind, and through this fearful shadow I cast it out, shall I not cast it out?"

"Say," said the Spectre, "is it done?"

"A moment longer!" he answered hurriedly. "*I would forget if I could!* Have *I* thought that, alone, or has it been the ought of thousands upon thousands, generation after generation? l human memory is fraught with sorrow and trouble. My mory is as the memory of other men, but other men have not s choice. Yes, I close the bargain. Yes! I WILL forget my row, wrong, and trouble!"

"Say," said the Spectre, "is it done?"

"It is!"

"IT IS. And take this with you, man whom I here renounce! e gift that I have given, you shall give again, go where you will. ithout recovering yourself the power that you have yielded up, shall henceforth destroy its like in all whom you approach. ur wisdom has discovered that the memory of sorrow, wrong, l trouble is the lot of all mankind, and that mankind would be happier, in its other memories, without it. Go! Be its bene- tor! Freed from such remembrance, from this hour, carry oluntarily the blessing of such freedom with you. Its diffusion inseparable and inalienable from you. Go! Be happy in the d you have won, and in the good you do!"

The Phantom, which had held its bloodless hand above him ile it spoke, as if in some unholy invocation, or some ban; and ich had gradually advanced its eyes so close to his, that he could how they did not participate in the terrible smile upon its face, were a fixed, unalterable, steady horror; melted before him l was gone.

As he stood rooted to the spot, possessed by fear and wonder, l imagining he heard repeated in melancholy echoes, dying away ter and fainter, the words, "Destroy its like in all whom you

approach!" a shrill cry reached his ears. It came, not from t passages beyond the door, but from another part of the old buildin and sounded like the cry of some one in the dark who had lost t way.

He looked confusedly upon his hands and limbs, as if to assured of his identity, and then shouted in reply, loudly a wildly; for there was a strangeness and terror upon him, as if too were lost.

The cry responding, and being nearer, he caught up the lam and raised a heavy curtain in the wall, by which he was accustom to pass into and out of the theatre where he lectured,—which joined his room. Associated with youth and animation, and high amphitheatre of faces which his entrance charmed to inter in a moment, it was a ghostly place when all this life was fad out of it, and stared upon him like an emblem of Death.

"Halloa!" he cried. "Halloa! This way! Come to t light!" When, as he held the curtain with one hand, and wi the other raised the lamp and tried to pierce the gloom that fill the place, something rushed past him into the room like a wild-c and crouched down in a corner.

"What is it?" he said, hastily.

He might have asked "What is it?" even had he seen it we as presently he did when he stood looking at it gathered up in corner.

A bundle of tatters, held together by a hand, in size and fo almost an infant's, but in its greedy, desperate little clutch, a l old man's. A face rounded and smoothed by some half-dozen yea but pinched and twisted by the experiences of a life. Bright ey but not youthful. Naked feet, beautiful in their childish delica —ugly in the blood and dirt that cracked upon them. A be savage, a young monster, a child who had never been a child, creature who might live to take the outward form of man, but wi within, would live and perish a mere beast.

Used, already, to be worried and hunted like a beast, the b crouched down as he was looked at, and looked back again, a interposed his arm to ward off the expected blow.

"I'll bite," he said, "if you hit me!"

The time had been, and not many minutes since, when such sight as this would have wrung the Chemist's heart. He look upon it now, coldly; but with a heavy effort to remember som thing—he did not know what—he asked the boy what he d there, and whence he came.

"Where's the woman?" he replied. "I want to find t woman."

"Who?"

"The woman. Her that brought me here, and set me by the ge fire. She was so long gone, that I went to look for her, and t myself. I don't want you. I want the woman."

He made a spring, so suddenly, to get away, that the dull sound his naked feet upon the floor was near the curtain, when Redlaw ught him by his rags.

"Come! you let me go!" muttered the boy, struggling, and

clenching his teeth. "I've done nothing to you. Let me go, w you, to the woman!"

"That is not the way. There is a nearer one," said Redla detaining him, in the same blank effort to remember some associ tion that ought, of right, to bear upon this monstrous obje "What is your name?"

"Got none."

"Where do you live?"

"Live! What's that?"

The boy shook his hair from his eyes to look at him for moment, and then, twisting round his legs and wrestling with hi broke again into his repetition of "You let me go, will you? want to find the woman."

The Chemist led him to the door. "This way," he said, looki at him still confusedly, but with repugnance and avoidance, growi out of his coldness. "I'll take you to her."

The sharp eyes in the child's head, wandering round the roo lighted on the table where the remnants of the dinner were.

"Give me some of that!" he said, covetously.

"Has she not fed you?"

"I shall be hungry again to-morrow, sha'n't I? Ain't I hung every day?"

Finding himself released, he bounded at the table like so small animal of prey, and hugging to his breast bread and mea and his own rags, all together, said:

"There! Now take me to the woman!"

As the Chemist, with a new-born dislike to touch him, ster motioned him to follow, and was going out of the door, he trembl and stopped.

"The gift that I have given, you shall give again, go whe you will!"

The Phantom's words were blowing in the wind, and the wi blew chill upon him.

"I'll not go there, to-night," he murmured faintly. "I'll nowhere to-night. Boy! straight down this long-arched passag and past the great dark door into the yard,—you see the fire shi ing on the window there."

"The woman's fire?" inquired the boy.

He nodded, and the naked feet had sprung away. He ca back with his lamp, locked his door hastily, and sat down in h chair, covering his face like one who was frightened at himself.

For now he was, indeed, alone. Alone, alone.

CHAPTER II.

THE GIFT DIFFUSED.

A SMALL man sat in a small parlour, partitioned off from a small shop by a small screen, pasted all over with small scraps of newspapers. In company with the small man, was almost any amount of small children you may please to name—at least it seemed so; they made, in that very limited sphere of action, such an imposing effect, in point of numbers.

Of these small fry, two had, by some strong machinery, been got into bed in a corner, where they might have reposed snugly enough in the sleep of innocence, but for a constitutional propensity to keep awake, and also to scuffle in and out of bed. The immediate occasion of these predatory dashes at the waking world, was the construction of an oyster-shell wall in a corner, by two other youths of tender age; on which fortification the two in bed made harassing descents (like those accursed Picts and Scots who beleaguer the early historical studies of most young Britons), and then withdrew to their own territory.

In addition to the stir attendant on these inroads, and the retorts of the invaded, who pursued hotly, and made lunges at the bedclothes under which the marauders took refuge, another little boy, in another little bed, contributed his mite of confusion to the family stock, by casting his boots upon the waters; in other words, by launching these and several small objects, inoffensive in themselves, though of a hard substance considered as missiles, at the disturbers of his repose,—who were not slow to return these compliments.

Besides which, another little boy—the biggest there, but still little—was tottering to and fro, bent on one side, and considerably affected in his knees by the weight of a large baby, which he was supposed by a fiction that obtains sometimes in sanguine families, to be hushing to sleep. But oh! the inexhaustible regions of contemplation and watchfulness into which this baby's eyes were then only beginning to compose themselves to stare, over his unconscious shoulder!

It was a very Moloch of a baby, on whose insatiate altar the whole existence of this particular young brother was offered up a daily sacrifice. Its personality may be said to have consisted in its never being quiet, in any one place, for five consecutive minutes,

and never going to sleep when required. "Tetterby's baby" w as well known in the neighbourhood as the postman or the pot-bo It roved from door-step to door-step, in the arms of little John Tetterby, and lagged heavily at the rear of troops of juveniles w followed the Tumblers or the Monkey, and came up, all on one sid a little too late for everything that was attractive, from Mond morning until Saturday night. Wherever childhood congregated play, there was little Moloch making Johnny fag and toil. Wh ever Johnny desired to stay, little Moloch became fractious, a would not remain. Whenever Johnny wanted to go out, Molo was asleep, and must be watched. Whenever Johnny wanted stay at home, Moloch was awake, and must be taken out. Y Johnny was verily persuaded that it was a faultless baby, withe its peer in the realm of England, and was quite content to ca meek glimpses of things in general from behind its skirts, or ou its limp flapping bonnet, and to go staggering about with it like very little porter with a very large parcel, which was not direct to anybody, and could never be delivered anywhere.

The small man who sat in the small parlour, making fruitl attempts to read his newspaper peaceably in the midst of t disturbance, was the father of the family, and the chief of the fi described in the inscription over the little shop front, by the na and title of A. TETTERBY AND Co., NEWSMEN. Indeed, strict speaking, he was the only personage answering to that designati as Co. was a mere poetical abstraction, altogether baseless a impersonal.

Tetterby's was the corner shop in Jerusalem Buildings. Th was a good show of literature in the window, chiefly consisting picture-newspapers out of date, and serial pirates, and footpa Walking-sticks, likewise, and marbles, were included in the st in trade. It had once extended into the light confectionery lin but it would seem that those elegancies of life were not in dema about Jerusalem Buildings, for nothing connected with that bra of commerce remained in the window, except a sort of small gl lantern containing a languishing mass of bull's-eyes, which h melted in the summer and congealed in the winter until all hope ever getting them out, or of eating them without eating the lant too, was gone for ever. Tetterby's had tried its hand at seve things. It had once made a feeble little dart at the toy busine for, in another lantern, there was a heap of minute wax dolls, sticking together upside down, in the direst confusion, with th feet on one another's heads, and a precipitate of broken arms a legs at the bottom. It had made a move in the millinery directi which a few dry, wiry bonnet-shapes remained in a corner of t

window to attest. It had fancied that a living might lie hidden in the tobacco trade, and had stuck up a representation of a native of each of the three integral portions of the British Empire, in the act of consuming that fragrant weed; with a poetic legend attached, importing that united in one cause they sat and joked, one chewed tobacco, one took snuff, one smoked: but nothing seemed to have come of it—except flies. Time had been when it had put a forlorn trust in imitative jewellery, for in one pane of glass there was a card of cheap seals, and another of pencil-cases, and a mysterious black amulet of inscrutable intention, labelled ninepence. But, to that hour, Jerusalem Buildings had bought none of them. In short, Tetterby's had tried so hard to get a livelihood out of Jerusalem Buildings in one way or other, and appeared to have done so indifferently in all, that the best position in the firm was too evidently Co.'s; Co., as a bodiless creation, being untroubled with the vulgar inconveniences of hunger and thirst, being chargeable neither to the poor's-rates nor the assessed taxes, and having no young family to provide for.

Tetterby himself, however, in his little parlour, as already mentioned, having the presence of a young family impressed upon his mind in a manner too clamorous to be disregarded, or to comport with the quiet perusal of a newspaper, laid down his paper, wheeled, in his distraction, a few times round the parlour, like an undecided carrier-pigeon, made an ineffectual rush at one or two flying little figures in bed-gowns that skimmed past him, and then, bearing suddenly down upon the only unoffending member of the family, boxed the ears of little Moloch's nurse.

"You bad boy!" said Mr. Tetterby, "haven't you any feeling for your poor father after the fatigues and anxieties of a hard winter's day, since five o'clock in the morning, but must you wither his rest, and corrode his latest intelligence, with *your* vicious tricks? Isn't it enough, Sir, that your brother 'Dolphus is toiling and moiling in the fog and cold, and you rolling in the lap of luxury with a—with a baby, and everything you can wish for," said Mr. Tetterby, heaping this up as a great climax of blessings, "but must you make a wilderness of home, and maniacs of your parents? Must you, Johnny? Hey?" At each interrogation, Mr. Tetterby made a feint of boxing his ears again, but thought better of it, and held his hand.

"Oh, father!" whimpered Johnny, "when I wasn't doing anything, I'm sure, but taking such care of Sally, and getting her to sleep. Oh, father!"

"I wish my little woman would come home!" said Mr. Tetterby, relenting and repenting, "I only wish my little woman

would come home! I ain't fit to deal with 'em. They make m head go round, and get the better of me. Oh, Johnny! Isn't enough that your dear mother has provided you with that swe sister?" indicating Moloch; "isn't it enough that you were seve boys before, without a ray of gal, and that your dear mother we through what she *did* go through, on purpose that you might of you have a little sister, but must you so behave yourself as make my head swim?'

Softening more and more, as his own tender feelings and tho of his injured son were worked on, Mr. Tetterby concluded embracing him, and immediately breaking away to catch one the real delinquents. A reasonably good start occurring, succeeded, after a short but smart run, and some rather seve cross-country work under and over the bedsteads, and in and o among the intricacies of the chairs, in capturing this infant, who he condignly punished, and bore to bed. This example had powerful, and apparently, mesmeric influence on him of the boo who instantly fell into a deep sleep, though he had been, but moment before, broad awake, and in the highest possible feathe Nor was it lost upon the two young architects, who retired to be in an adjoining closet, with great privacy and speed. The comra of the Intercepted One also shrinking into his nest with simil discretion, Mr. Tetterby, when he paused for breath, found himse unexpectedly in a scene of peace.

"My little woman herself," said Mr. Tetterby, wiping h flushed face, "could hardly have done it better! I only wish m little woman had had it to do, I do indeed!"

Mr. Tetterby sought upon his screen for a passage appropria to be impressed upon his children's minds on the occasion, a read the following.

"'It is an undoubted fact that all remarkable men have h remarkable mothers, and have respected them in after life as the best friends.' Think of your own remarkable mother, my boys, said Mr. Tetterby, "and know her value while she is still amo you!"

He sat down again in his chair by the fire, and composed hi self, cross-legged, over his newspaper.

"Let anybody, I don't care who it is, get out of bed again, said Tetterby, as a general proclamation, delivered in a very so hearted manner, "and astonishment will be the portion of th respected contemporary!"—which expression Mr. Tetterby selecte from his screen. "Johnny, my child, take care of your on sister, Sally; for she's the brightest gem that ever sparkled o your early brow."

Johnny sat down on a little stool, and devotedly crushed himself beneath the weight of Moloch.

"Ah, what a gift that baby is to you, Johnny!" said his father, 'and how thankful you ought to be! 'It is not generally known,' Johnny," he was now referring to the screen again, "'but it is a fact ascertained, by accurate calculations, that the following mmense percentage of babies never attain to two years old; that s to say——'"

"Oh, don't, father, please!" cried Johnny. "I can't bear it, when I think of Sally."

Mr. Tetterby desisting, Johnny, with a profounder sense of his rust, wiped his eyes, and hushed his sister.

"Your brother 'Dolphus," said his father, poking the fire, "is ate to-night, Johnny, and will come home like a lump of ice. What's got your precious mother?"

"Here's mother, and 'Dolphus too, father!" exclaimed Johnny, 'I think."

"You're right!" returned his father, listening. "Yes, that's he footstep of my little woman."

The process of induction, by which Mr. Tetterby had come to he conclusion that his wife was a little woman, was his own ecret. She would have made two editions of himself, very easily. Considered as an individual, she was rather remarkable for being obust and portly; but considered with reference to her husband, er dimensions became magnificent. Nor did they assume a less mposing proportion, when studied with reference to the size of er seven sons, who were but diminutive. In the case of Sally, owever, Mrs. Tetterby had asserted herself, at last; as nobody new better than the victim Johnny, who weighed and measured hat exacting idol every hour in the day.

Mrs. Tetterby, who had been marketing, and carried a basket, hrew back her bonnet and shawl, and sitting down, fatigued, ommanded Johnny to bring his sweet charge to her straightway, or a kiss. Johnny having complied, and gone back to his stool, nd again crushed himself, Master Adolphus Tetterby, who had y this time unwound his torso out of a prismatic comforter, pparently interminable, requested the same favour. Johnny aving again complied, and again gone back to his stool, and again rushed himself, Mr. Tetterby, struck by a sudden thought, preferred the same claim on his own parental part. The satisfaction f this third desire completely exhausted the sacrifice, who had ardly breath enough left to get back to his stool, crush himself gain, and pant at his relations.

"Whatever you do, Johnny," said Mrs. Tetterby, shaking her

head, "take care of her, or never look your mother in the fa again."

"Nor your brother," said Adolphus.

"Nor your father, Johnny," added Mr. Tetterby.

Johnny, much affected by this conditional renunciation of hi looked down at Moloch's eyes to see that they were all right, far, and skilfully patted her back (which was uppermost), a rocked her with his foot.

"Are you wet, 'Dolphus, my boy?" said his father. "Co and take my chair, and dry yourself."

"No, father, thank'ee," said Adolphus, smoothing himself do with his hands. "I an't very wet, I don't think. Does my fa shine much, father?"

"Well, it *does* look waxy, my boy," returned Mr. Tetterby.

"It's the weather, father," said Adolphus, polishing h cheeks on the worn sleeve of his jacket. "What with rai and sleet, and wind, and snow, and fog, my face gets qui brought out into a rash sometimes. And shines, it does—o don't it, though!"

Master Adolphus was also in the newspaper line of life, bei employed, by a more thriving firm than his father and Co., vend newspapers at a railway station, where his chubby litt person, like a shabbily-disguised Cupid, and his shrill little voi (he was not much more than ten years old), were as well know as the hoarse panting of the locomotives, running in and out. H juvenility might have been at some loss for a harmless outlet, this early application to traffic, but for a fortunate discovery made of a means of entertaining himself, and of dividing t long day into stages of interest, without neglecting business. Th ingenious invention, remarkable, like many great discoveries, f its simplicity, consisted in varying the first vowel in the wo "paper," and substituting, in its stead, at different periods of t day, all the other vowels in grammatical succession. Thus, befo daylight in the winter-time, he went to and fro, in his little oilsk cap and cape, and his big comforter, piercing the heavy air wi his cry of "Morn-ing Pa-per!" which, about an hour before noo changed to "Morn-ing Pep-per!" which, at about two, changed t "Morn-ing Pip-per!" which, in a couple of hours, changed t "Morn-ing Pop-per!" and so declined with the sun into "Eve-nin Pup-per!" to the great relief and comfort of this young gentl man's spirits.

Mrs. Tetterby, his lady-mother, who had been sitting with he bonnet and shawl thrown back, as aforesaid, thoughtfully turnin her wedding-ring round and round upon her finger, now rose, an

vesting herself of her out-of-door attire, began to lay the cloth r supper.

"Ah, dear me, dear me, dear me!" said Mrs. Tetterby. That's the way the world goes!"

"Which is the way the world goes, my dear?" asked Mr. etterby, looking round.

"Oh, nothing," said Mrs. Tetterby.

Mr. Tetterby elevated his eyebrows, folded his newspaper afresh, d carried his eyes up it, and down it, and across it, but was andering in his attention, and not reading it.

Mrs. Tetterby, at the same time, laid the cloth, but rather as if e were punishing the table than preparing the family supper; tting it unnecessarily hard with the knives and forks, slapping

it with the plates, dinting it with the salt-cellar, and comin heavily down upon it with the loaf.

"Ah, dear me, dear me, dear me!" said Mrs. Tetterb "That's the way the world goes!"

"My duck," returned her husband, looking round again, "yo said that before. Which is the way the world goes?"

"Oh, nothing!" said Mrs. Tetterby.

"Sophia!" remonstrated her husband, "you said *that* before too."

"Well, I'll say it again if you like," returned Mrs. Tetterby "Oh nothing—there! And again if you like, oh nothing—there And again if you like, oh nothing—now then!"

Mr. Tetterby brought his eye to bear upon the partner of hi bosom, and said, in mild astonishment:

"My little woman, what has put you out?"

"I'm sure *I* don't know," she retorted. "Don't ask me. Wh said I was put out at all? *I* never did."

Mr. Tetterby gave up the perusal of his newspaper as a ba job, and, taking a slow walk across the room, with his hand behind him, and his shoulders raised—his gait according perfectl with the resignation of his manner—addressed himself to his tw eldest offspring.

"Your supper will be ready in a minute, 'Dolphus," said Mr Tetterby. "Your mother has been out in the wet, to the cook shop, to buy it. It was very good of your mother so to do. Yo shall get some supper too, very soon, Johnny. Your mother pleased with you, my man, for being so attentive to your precious sister."

Mrs. Tetterby, without any remark, but with a decided subsid ence of her animosity towards the table, finished her preparations and took, from her ample basket, a substantial slab of hot pea pudding wrapped in paper, and a basin covered with a saucer which, on being uncovered, sent forth an odour so agreeable, tha the three pair of eyes in the two beds opened wide and fixed them selves upon the banquet. Mr. Tetterby, without regarding thi tacit invitation to be seated, stood repeating slowly, "Yes, yes your supper will be ready in a minute, 'Dolphus—your mother went out in the wet, to the cook's shop, to buy it. It was very good of your mother so to do"—until Mrs. Tetterby, who had been exhibiting sundry tokens of contrition behind him, caught him round the neck, and wept

"Oh, 'Dolphus!" said Mrs. Tetterby, "how could I go and behave so?"

This reconciliation affected Adolphus the younger and Johnny

that degree, that they both, as with one accord, raised a dismal y, which had the effect of immediately shutting up the round eyes the beds, and utterly routing the two remaining little Tetterbys, st then stealing in from the adjoining closet to see what was oing on in the eating way.

"I am sure, 'Dolphus," sobbed Mrs. Tetterby, "coming home, had no more idea than a child unborn——"

Mr. Tetterby seemed to dislike this figure of speech, and bserved, "Say than the baby, my dear."

"—Had no more idea than the baby," said Mrs. Tetterby.—Johnny, don't look at me, but look at her, or she'll fall out of our lap and be killed, and then you'll die in agonies of a broken eart, and serve you right.—No more idea I hadn't than that arling, of being cross when I came home; but somehow, Dolphus——" Mrs. Tetterby paused, and again turned her edding-ring round and round upon her finger.

"I see!" said Mr. Tetterby. "I understand! My little oman was put out. Hard times, and hard weather, and hard ork, make it trying now and then. I see, bless your soul! No onder! 'Dolf, my man," continued Mr. Tetterby, exploring the asin with a fork, "here's your mother been and bought, at the ook's shop, besides pease pudding, a whole knuckle of a lovely east leg of pork, with lots of crackling left upon it, and with easoning gravy and mustard quite unlimited. Hand in your plate, y boy, and begin while it's simmering."

Master Adolphus, needing no second summons, received his ortion with eyes rendered moist by appetite, and withdrawing to is particular stool, fell upon his supper tooth and nail. Johnny as not forgotten, but received his rations on bread, lest he should, a flush of gravy, trickle any on the baby. He was required, for milar reasons, to keep his pudding, when not on active service, his pocket.

There might have been more pork on the knucklebone,—which nucklebone the carver at the cook's shop had assuredly not for-otten in carving for previous customers—but there was no stint seasoning, and that is an accessory dreamily suggesting pork, d pleasantly cheating the sense of taste. The pease pudding, o, the gravy and mustard, like the Eastern rose in respect of the ghtingale, if they were not absolutely pork, had lived near it; upon the whole, there was the flavour of a middle-sized pig. was irresistible to the Tetterbys in bed, who, though professing slumber peacefully, crawled out when unseen by their parents, d silently appealed to their brothers for any gastronomic token fraternal affection. They, not hard of heart, presenting scraps

in return, it resulted that a party of light skirmishers in night gowns were careering about the parlour all through supper, which harassed Mr. Tetterby exceedingly, and once or twice imposed upon him the necessity of a charge, before which these guerilla troops retired in all directions and in great confusion.

Mrs. Tetterby did not enjoy her supper. There seemed to be something on Mrs. Tetterby's mind. At one time she laughed without reason, and at another time she cried without reason, and at last she laughed and cried together in a manner so very unreasonable that her husband was confounded.

"My little woman," said Mr. Tetterby, "if the world goes the way, it appears to go the wrong way, and to choke you."

"Give me a drop of water," said Mrs. Tetterby, struggling with herself, "and don't speak to me for the present, or take any notice of me. Don't do it!"

Mr. Tetterby having administered the water, turned suddenly on the unlucky Johnny (who was full of sympathy), and demanded why he was wallowing there, in gluttony and idleness, instead of coming forward with the baby, that the sight of her might revive his mother. Johnny immediately approached, borne down by its weight; but Mrs. Tetterby holding out her hand to signify that she was not in a condition to bear that trying appeal to her feelings, he was interdicted from advancing another inch, on pain of perpetual hatred from all his dearest connections; and accordingly retired to his stool again, and crushed himself as before.

After a pause, Mrs. Tetterby said she was better now, and began to laugh.

"My little woman," said her husband, dubiously, "are you quite sure you're better? Or are you, Sophia, about to break out in a fresh direction?"

"No, 'Dolphus, no," replied his wife. "I'm quite myself." With that, settling her hair, and pressing the palms of her hands upon her eyes, she laughed again.

"What a wicked fool I was, to think so for a moment!" said Mrs. Tetterby. "Come nearer, 'Dolphus, and let me ease my mind and tell you what I mean. Let me tell you all about it."

Mr. Tetterby bringing his chair closer, Mrs. Tetterby laughed again, gave him a hug, and wiped her eyes.

"You know, 'Dolphus, my dear," said Mrs. Tetterby, "that when I was single, I might have given myself away in several directions. At one time, four after me at once; two of them were sons of Mars."

"We're all sons of Ma's, my dear," said Mr. Tetterby, "joint with Pa's."

"I don't mean that," replied his wife, "I mean soldiers—erjeants."

"Oh!" said Mr. Tetterby.

"Well, 'Dolphus, I'm sure I never think of such things now, to egret them; and I'm sure I've got as good a husband, and would o as much to prove that I was fond of him, as——"

"As any little woman in the world," said Mr. Tetterby. Very good. *Very* good."

If Mr. Tetterby had been ten feet high, he could not have xpressed a gentler consideration for Mrs. Tetterby's fairy-like ature; and if Mrs. Tetterby had been two feet high, she could ot have felt it more appropriately her due.

"But you see, 'Dolphus," said Mrs. Tetterby, "this being hristmas-time, when all people who can, make holiday, and when ll people who have got money, like to spend some, I did, somehow, et a little out of sorts when I was in the streets just now. here were so many things to be sold—such delicious things to eat, uch fine things to look at, such delightful things to have—and ere was so much calculating and calculating necessary, before I rst lay out a sixpence for the commonest thing; and the basket as so large, and wanted so much in it; and my stock of money as so small, and would go such a little way;—you hate me, don't ou, 'Dolphus?"

"Not quite," said Mr. Tetterby, "as yet."

"Well! I'll tell you the whole truth," pursued his wife, enitently, "and then perhaps you will. I felt all this, so much, hen I was trudging about in the cold, and when I saw a lot of her calculating faces and large baskets trudging about, too, that began to think whether I mightn't have done better, and been appier, if—I—hadn't—" the wedding-ring went round again, and Irs. Tetterby shook her downcast head as she turned it.

"I see," said her husband quietly; "if you hadn't married at ll, or if you had married somebody else?"

"Yes," sobbed Mrs. Tetterby. "That's really what I thought. o you hate me now, 'Dolphus?"

"Why no," said Mr. Tetterby, "I don't find that I do, as yet."

Mrs. Tetterby gave him a thankful kiss, and went on.

"I begin to hope you won't, now, 'Dolphus, though I am afraid haven't told you the worst. I can't think what came over me. don't know whether I was ill, or mad, or what I was, but I ouldn't call up anything that seemed to bind us to each other, or reconcile me to my fortune. All the pleasures and enjoyments e had ever had—*they* seemed so poor and insignificant, I hated em. I could have trodden on them. And I could think of

nothing else, except our being poor, and the number of mouth there were at home."

"Well, well, my dear," said Mr. Tetterby, shaking her hand encouragingly, "that's truth, after all. We *are* poor, and the *are* a number of mouths at home here."

"Ah! but, Dolf, Dolf!" cried his wife, laying her hands upo his neck, "my good, kind, patient fellow, when I had been home a very little while—how different! Oh, Dolf, dear, ho different it was! I felt as if there was a rush of recollection c me, all at once, that softened my hard heart, and filled it up t it was bursting. All our struggles for a livelihood, all our car and wants since we have been married, all the times of sickne all the hours of watching, we have ever had, by one another, or t the children, seemed to speak to me, and say that they had ma us one, and that I never might have been, or could have been, would have been, any other than the wife and mother I a Then, the cheap enjoyments that I could have trodden on cruelly, got to be so precious to me—Oh so priceless, and dear that I couldn't bear to think how much I had wronged them; a I said, and say again a hundred times, how could I ever behave 'Dolphus, how could I ever have the heart to do it!"

The good woman, quite carried away by her honest tenderne and remorse, was weeping with all her heart, when she started with a scream, and ran behind her husband. Her cry was terrified, that the children started from their sleep and from the beds, and clung about her. Nor did her gaze belie her voice, she pointed to a pale man in a black cloak who had come into t room.

"Look at that man! Look there! What does he want?"

"My dear," returned her husband, "I'll ask him if you'll l me go. What's the matter? How you shake!"

"I saw him in the street, when I was out just now. He look at me, and stood near me. I am afraid of him."

"Afraid of him! Why?"

"I don't know why—I—stop! husband!" for he was goi towards the stranger.

She had one hand pressed upon her forehead, and one upon h breast; and there was a peculiar fluttering all over her, and hurried unsteady motion of her eyes, as if she had lost something

"Are you ill, my dear?"

"What is it that is going from me again?" she muttered, in low voice. "What *is* this that is going away?"

Then she abruptly answered: "Ill? No, I am quite well and stood looking vacantly at the floor.

Her husband, who had not been altogether free from the infec-
n of her fear at first, and whom the present strangeness of her
nner did not tend to reassure, addressed himself to the pale
itor in the black cloak, who stood still, and whose eyes were
nt upon the ground.

"What may be your pleasure, Sir," he asked, "with us?"

"I fear that my coming in unperceived," returned the visitor,
as alarmed you; but you were talking and did not hear me."

"My little woman says—perhaps you heard her say it,"
turned Mr. Tetterby, "that it's not the first time you have
rmed her to-night."

"I am sorry for it. I remember to have observed her, for a
w moments only, in the street. I had no intention of frightening
r."

As he raised his eyes in speaking, she raised hers. It was
traordinary to see what dread she had of him, and with what
ead he observed it—and yet how narrowly and closely.

"My name," he said, "is Redlaw. I come from the old college
rd by. A young gentleman who is a student there, lodges in
ur house, does he not?"

"Mr. Denham?" said Tetterby.

"Yes."

It was a natural action, and so slight as to be hardly noticeable;
t the little man, before speaking again, passed his hand across
s forehead, and looked quickly round the room, as though he
re sensible of some change in its atmosphere. The Chemist,
stantly transferring to him the look of dread he had directed
wards the wife, stepped back, and his face turned paler.

"The gentleman's room," said Tetterby, "is upstairs, Sir.
ere's a more convenient private entrance; but as you have come
here, it will save your going out into the cold, if you'll take
is little staircase," showing one communicating directly with the
rlour, "and go up to him that way, if you wish to see him."

"Yes, I wish to see him," said the Chemist. "Can you spare
light?"

The watchfulness of his haggard look, and the inexplicable
strust that darkened it, seemed to trouble Mr. Tetterby. He
used; and looking fixedly at him in return, stood for a minute
so, like a man stupefied, or fascinated.

At length he said, "I'll light you, Sir, if you'll follow me."

"No," replied the Chemist, "I don't wish to be attended,
announced to him. He does not expect me. I would rather
alone. Please to give me the light, if you can spare it, and I'll
d the way."

In the quickness of his expression of this desire, and in taki the candle from the newsman, he touched him on the bre Withdrawing his hand hastily, almost as though he had wound him by accident (for he did not know in what part of himself new power resided, or how it was communicated, or how the ma of its reception varied in different persons), he turned and asce the stair.

But when he reached the top, he stopped and looked d The wife was standing in the same place, twisting her ring r and round upon her finger. The husband, with his head forward on his breast, was musing heavily and sullenly. children, still clustering about the mother, gazed timidly after visitor, and nestled together when they saw him looking down.

"Come!" said the father, roughly. "There's enough of thi Get to bed here!"

"The place is inconvenient and small enough," the moth added, "without you. Get to bed!"

The whole brood, scared and sad, crept away; little John and the baby lagging last. The mother, glancing contemptuous round the sordid room, and tossing from her the fragments of the meal, stopped on the threshold of her task of clearing the tabl

and sat down, pondering idly and dejectedly. The father betoo himself to the chimney-corner, and impatiently raking the sma fire together, bent over it as if he would monopolise it all. Th did not interchange a word.

The Chemist, paler than before, stole upward like a thief; ring back upon the change below, and dreading equally to go on or return.

"What have I done!" he said, confusedly. "What am I going to do!"

"To be the benefactor of mankind," he thought he heard a voice reply.

He looked round, but there was nothing there; and a passage now shutting out the little parlour from his view, he went on, directing his eyes before him at the way he went.

"It is only since last night," he muttered gloomily, "that I have remained shut up, and yet all things are strange to me. I am strange to myself. I am here, as in a dream. What interest have I in this place, or in any place that I can bring to my remembrance? My mind is going blind!"

There was a door before him, and he knocked at it. Being invited, by voice within, to enter, he complied.

"Is that my kind nurse?" said the voice. "But I need not k her. There is no one else to come here."

It spoke cheerfully, though in a languid tone, and attracted s attention to a young man lying on a couch, drawn before the imney-piece, with the back towards the door. A meagre scanty

stove, pinched and hollowed like a sick man's cheeks, and bricke into the centre of a hearth that it could scarcely warm, containe the fire, to which his face was turned. Being so near the wind house-top, it wasted quickly, and with a busy sound, and t burning ashes dropped down fast.

"They chink when they shoot out here," said the studen smiling, "so, according to the gossips, they are not coffins, b purses. I shall be well and rich yet, some day, if it please Go and shall live perhaps to love a daughter Milly, in remembran of the kindest nature and the gentlest heart in the world."

He put up his hand as if expecting her to take it, but, bei weakened, he lay still, with his face resting on his other han and did not turn round.

The Chemist glanced about the room;—at the student's boo and papers, piled upon a table in a corner, where they, and h extinguished reading-lamp, now prohibited and put away, told the attentive hours that had gone before this illness, and perha caused it;—at such signs of his old health and freedom, as t out-of-door attire that hung idle on the wall;—at those remem brances of other and less solitary scenes, the little miniatures up the chimney-piece, and the drawing of home;—at that token his emulation, perhaps, in some sort, of his personal attachme too, the framed engraving of himself, the looker-on. The tin had been, only yesterday, when not one of these objects, in i remotest association of interest with the living figure before hi would have been lost on Redlaw. Now, they were but object or, if any gleam of such connexion shot upon him, it perplexe and not enlightened him, as he stood looking round with a du wonder.

The student, recalling the thin hand which had remained long untouched, raised himself on the couch, and turned h head.

"Mr. Redlaw!" he exclaimed, and started up.

Redlaw put out his arm.

"Don't come nearer to me. I will sit here. Remain yo where you are!"

He sat down on a chair near the door, and having glanced the young man standing leaning with his hand upon the couc spoke with his eyes averted towards the ground.

"I heard, by an accident, by what accident is no matter, th one of my class was ill and solitary. I received no other descri tion of him, than that he lived in this street. Beginning m inquiries at the first house in it, I have found him."

"I have been ill, Sir," returned the student, not merely with

modest hesitation, but with a kind of awe of him, "but am greatly better. An attack of fever—of the brain, I believe—has weakened me, but I am much better. I cannot say I have been solitary, in my illness, or I should forget the ministering hand that has been near me."

"You are speaking of the keeper's wife," said Redlaw.

"Yes." The student bent his head, as if he rendered her some silent homage.

The Chemist, in whom there was a cold, monotonous apathy, which rendered him more like a marble image on the tomb of the man who had started from his dinner yesterday at the first mention of this student's case, than the breathing man himself, glanced again at the student leaning with his hand upon the couch, and looked upon the ground, and in the air, as if for light for his blinded mind.

"I remembered your name," he said, "when it was mentioned to me down stairs, just now; and I recollect your face. We have held but very little personal communication together?"

"Very little."

"You have retired and withdrawn from me, more than any of the rest, I think?"

The student signified assent.

"And why?" said the Chemist; not with the least expression of interest, but with a moody, wayward kind of curiosity. "Why? How comes it that you have sought to keep especially from me, the knowledge of your remaining here, at this season, when all the rest have dispersed, and of your being ill? I want to know why this is?"

The young man, who had heard him with increasing agitation, raised his downcast eyes to his face, and clasping his hands together, cried with sudden earnestness and with trembling lips:

"Mr. Redlaw! You have discovered me. You know my secret!"

"Secret?" said the Chemist, harshly. "*I* know?"

"Yes! Your manner, so different from the interest and sympathy which endear you to so many hearts, your altered voice, the constraint there is in everything you say, and in your looks," replied the student, "warn me that you know me. That you would conceal it, even now, is but a proof to me (God knows I need none!) of your natural kindness, and of the bar there is between us."

A vacant and contemptuous laugh, was all his answer.

"But, Mr. Redlaw," said the student, "as a just man, and a good man, think how innocent I am, except in name and descent,

of participation in any wrong inflicted on you, or in any sorro you have borne."

"Sorrow!" said Redlaw, laughing. "Wrong! What a those to me?"

"For Heaven's sake," entreated the shrinking student, "d not let the mere interchange of a few words with me chan you like this, Sir! Let me pass again from your knowledge an notice. Let me occupy my old reserved and distant place amon those whom you instruct. Know me only by the name I ha assumed, and not by that of Longford——"

"Longford!" exclaimed the other.

He clasped his head with both his hands, and for a momen turned upon the young man his own intelligent and thoughtfu face. But the light passed from it, like the sunbeam of an instan and it clouded as before.

"The name my mother bears, Sir," faltered the young ma "the name she took, when she might, perhaps, have taken o more honoured. Mr. Redlaw," hesitating, "I believe I know th history. Where my information halts, my guesses at what wanting may supply something not remote from the truth. I a the child of a marriage that has not proved itself a well-assorte or a happy one. From infancy, I have heard you spoken of wit honour and respect—with something that was almost reverenc I have heard of such devotion, of such fortitude and tenderness, such rising up against the obstacles which press men down, th my fancy, since I learnt my little lesson from my mother, has she a lustre on your name. At last, a poor student myself, from whom could I learn but you?"

Redlaw, unmoved, unchanged, and looking at him with staring frown, answered by no word or sign.

"I cannot say," pursued the other, "I should try in vain t say, how much it has impressed me, and affected me, to find th gracious traces of the past, in that certain power of winning grat tude and confidence which is associated among us students (amon the humblest of us, most) with Mr. Redlaw's generous name Our ages and positions are so different, Sir, and I am s accustomed to regard you from a distance, that I wonder at m own presumption when I touch, however lightly, on that theme But to one who—I may say, who felt no common interest in m mother once—it may be something to hear, now that all is past with what indescribable feelings of affection I have, in m obscurity, regarded him; with what pain and reluctance I hav kept aloof from his encouragement, when a word of it would hav made me rich; yet how I have felt it fit that I should hold m

course, content to know him, and to be unknown. Mr. Redlaw," said the student, faintly, "what I would have said, I have said ill, for my strength is strange to me as yet; but for anything unworthy in this fraud of mine, forgive me, and for all the rest forget me!"

The staring frown remained on Redlaw's face, and yielded to no other expression until the student, with these words, advanced towards him, as if to touch his hand, when he drew back and cried to him:

"Don't come nearer to me!"

The young man stopped, shocked by the eagerness of his recoil, and by the sternness of his repulsion; and he passed his hand, thoughtfully, across his forehead.

"The past is past," said the Chemist. "It dies like the brutes. Who talks to me of its traces in my life? He raves or lies! What have I to do with your distempered dreams? If you want money, here it is. I came to offer it; and that is all I came for. There can be nothing else that brings me here," he muttered, holding his head again, with both his hands. "There *can* be nothing else, and yet——"

He had tossed his purse upon the table. As he fell into this dim cogitation with himself, the student took it up, and held it out to him.

"Take it back, Sir," he said proudly, though not angrily. "I wish you could take from me, with it, the remembrance of your words and offer."

"You do?" he retorted, with a wild light in his eyes. "You do?"

"I do!"

The Chemist went close to him, for the first time, and took the purse, and turned him by the arm, and looked him in the face.

"There is sorrow and trouble in sickness, is there not?" he demanded, with a laugh.

The wondering student answered, "Yes."

"In its unrest, in its anxiety, in its suspense, in all its train of physical and mental miseries?" said the Chemist, with a wild unearthly exultation. "All best forgotten, are they not?"

The student did not answer, but again passed his hand, confusedly, across his forehead. Redlaw still held him by the sleeve, when Milly's voice was heard outside.

"I can see very well now," she said, "thank you, Dolf. Don't cry, dear. Father and mother will be comfortable again, to-morrow, and home will be comfortable too. A gentleman with him, is there!"

Redlaw released his hold, as he listened.

"I have feared, from the first moment," he murmured to himself "to meet her. There is a steady quality of goodness in her, that I dread to influence. I may be the murderer of what is tenderest and best within her bosom."

She was knocking at the door.

"Shall I dismiss it as an idle foreboding, or still avoid her?" he muttered, looking uneasily around.

She was knocking at the door again.

"Of all the visitors who could come here," he said, in a hoarse alarmed voice, turning to his companion, "this is the one I should desire most to avoid. Hide me!"

The student opened a frail door in the wall, communicating where the garret-roof began to slope towards the floor, with a small inner room. Redlaw passed in hastily, and shut it after him.

The student then resumed his place upon the couch, and called to her to enter.

"Dear Mr. Edmund," said Milly, looking round, "they told me there was a gentleman here."

"There is no one here but I."

"There has been some one?"

"Yes, yes, there has been some one."

She put her little basket on the table, and went up to the back of the couch, as if to take the extended hand—but it was not there. A little surprised, in her quiet way, she leaned over to look at his face, and gently touched him on the brow.

"Are you quite as well to-night? Your head is not so cool as in the afternoon."

"Tut!" said the student, petulantly, "very little ails me."

A little more surprise, but no reproach, was expressed in her face, as she withdrew to the other side of the table, and took a small packet of needlework from her basket. But she laid it down again, on second thoughts, and going noiselessly about the room, set everything exactly in its place, and in the neatest order; even to the cushions on the couch, which she touched with so light a hand, that he hardly seemed to know it, as he lay looking at the fire. When all this was done, and she had swept the hearth, she sat down, in her modest little bonnet, to her work, and was quietly busy on it directly.

"It's the new muslin curtain for the window, Mr. Edmund," said Milly, stitching away as she talked. "It will look very clean and nice, though it costs very little, and will save your eyes, too, from the light. My William says the room should not be too light just now, when you are recovering so well, or the glare might make you giddy."

He said nothing; but there was something so fretful and impatient in his change of position, that her quick fingers stopped, and she looked at him anxiously.

"The pillows are not comfortable," she said, laying down her work and rising. "I will soon put them right."

"They are very well," he answered. "Leave them alone, pray. You make so much of everything."

He raised his head to say this, and looked at her so thanklessly, that, after he had thrown himself down again, she stood timidly pausing. However, she resumed her seat, and her needle, without having directed even a murmuring look towards him, and was soon as busy as before.

"I have been thinking, Mr. Edmund, that *you* have been often thinking of late, when I have been sitting by, how true the saying is, that adversity is a good teacher. Health will be more precious to you, after this illness, than it has ever been. And years hence, when this time of year comes round, and you remember the days when you lay here sick, alone, that the knowledge of your illness

might not afflict those who are dearest to you, your home will b doubly dear and doubly blest. Now, isn't that a good, tru thing?"

She was too intent upon her work, and too earnest in what sh said, and too composed and quiet altogether, to be on the watch fo any look he might direct towards her in reply; so the shaft of hi ungrateful glance fell harmless, and did not wound her.

"Ah!" said Milly, with her pretty head inclining thoughtfull on one side, as she looked down, following her busy fingers wit her eyes. "Even on me—and I am very different from you, Mr Edmund, for I have no learning, and don't know how to think properly—this view of such things has made a great impressio since you have been lying ill. When I have seen you so touche by the kindness and attention of the poor people down stairs, have felt that you thought even that experience some repaymen for the loss of health, and I have read in your face, as plain as if i was a book, that but for some trouble and sorrow we should neve know half the good there is about us."

His getting up from the couch, interrupted her, or she wo going on to say more.

"We needn't magnify the merit, Mrs. William," he rejoine slightingly. "The people down stairs will be paid in good time dare say, for any little extra service they may have rendered me and perhaps they anticipate no less. I am much obliged to you, too."

Her fingers stopped, and she looked at him.

"I can't be made to feel the more obliged by your exaggeratin the case," he said. "I am sensible that you have been interested in me, and I say I am much obliged to you. What more would you have?"

Her work fell on her lap, as she still looked at him walking to and fro with an intolerant air, and stopping now and then.

"I say again, I am much obliged to you. Why weaken m sense of what is your due in obligation, by preferring enormou claims upon me? Trouble, sorrow, affliction, adversity! One might suppose I had been dying a score of deaths here!"

"Do you believe, Mr. Edmund," she asked, rising and goin nearer to him, "that I spoke of the poor people of the house, wit any reference to myself? To me?" laying her hand upon he bosom with a simple and innocent smile of astonishment.

"Oh! I think nothing about it, my good creature," he returned "I have had an indisposition, which your solicitude—observe! I say solicitude—makes a great deal more of, than it merits; and it's over, and we can't perpetuate it."

He coldly took a book, and sat down at the table.

She watched him for a little while, until her smile was quite gone, and then, returning to where her basket was, said gently:

"Mr. Edmund, would you rather be alone?"

"There is no reason why I should detain you here," he replied.

"Except——" said Milly, hesitating, and showing her work.

"Oh! the curtain," he answered, with a supercilious laugh. "That's not worth staying for."

She made up the little packet again, and put it in her basket. Then, standing before him with such an air of patient entreaty that he could not choose but look at her, she said:

"If you should want me, I will come back willingly. When you did want me, I was quite happy to come; there was no merit in it. I think you must be afraid, that, now you are getting well, I may be troublesome to you; but I should not have been, indeed. I should have come no longer than your weakness and confinement lasted. You owe me nothing; but it is right that you should deal as justly by me as if I was a lady—even the very lady that you love; and if you suspect me of meanly making much of the little I have tried to do to comfort your sick room, you do yourself more wrong than ever you can do me. That is why I am sorry. That is why I am very sorry."

If she had been as passionate as she was quiet, as indignant as she was calm, as angry in her look as she was gentle, as loud of tone as she was low and clear, she might have left no sense of her departure in the room, compared with that which fell upon the lonely student when she went away.

He was gazing drearily upon the place where she had been, when Redlaw came out of his concealment, and came to the door.

"When sickness lays its hand on you again," he said, looking fiercely back at him, "—may it be soon!—Die here! Rot here!"

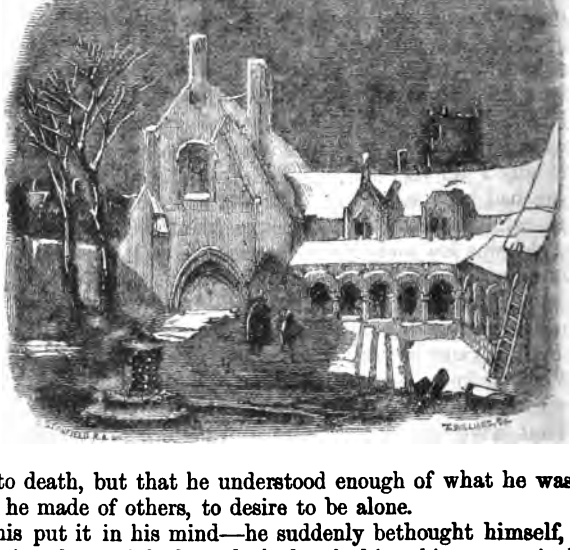
"What have you done?" returned the other, catching at his cloak. "What change have you wrought in me? What curse have you brought upon me? Give me back myself!"

"Give me back *my*self!" exclaimed Redlaw like a madman. "I am infected! I am infectious! I am charged with poison for my own mind, and the minds of all mankind. Where I felt interest, compassion, sympathy, I am turning into stone. Selfishness and ingratitude spring up in my blighting footsteps. I am only so much less base than the wretches whom I make so, that in the moment of their transformation I can hate them."

As he spoke—the young man still holding to his cloak—he cast him off, and struck him: then, wildly hurried out into the night air where the wind was blowing, the snow falling, the cloud-drift sweeping on, the moon dimly shining; and where, blowing in the

wind, falling with the snow, drifting with the clouds, shining in the moonlight, and heavily looming in the darkness, were the Phantom's words, "The gift that I have given, you shall give again go where you will!"

Whither he went, he neither knew nor cared, so that he avoided company. The change he felt within him made the busy streets a desert, and himself a desert, and the multitude around him, in their manifold endurances and ways of life, a mighty waste of sand which the winds tossed into unintelligible heaps and made a ruinous confusion of. Those traces in his breast which the Phantom had told him would "die out soon," were not, as yet, so far upon their



way to death, but that he understood enough of what he was, and what he made of others, to desire to be alone.

This put it in his mind—he suddenly bethought himself, as he was going along, of the boy who had rushed into his room. And then he recollected, that of those with whom he had communicated since the Phantom's disappearance, that boy alone had shown no sign of being changed.

Monstrous and odious as the wild thing was to him, he determined to seek it out, and prove if this were really so; and also to seek it with another intention, which came into his thoughts at the same time.

So, resolving with some difficulty where he was, he directed his

steps back to the old college, and to that part of it where the general porch was, and where, alone, the pavement was worn by the tread of the students' feet.

The keeper's house stood just within the iron gates, forming a part of the chief quadrangle. There was a little cloister outside, and from that sheltered place he knew he could look in at the window of their ordinary room, and see who was within. The iron gates were shut, but his hand was familiar with the fastening, and drawing it back by thrusting in his wrist between the bars, he passed through softly, shut it again, and crept up to the window, crumbling the thin crust of snow with his feet.

The fire, to which he had directed the boy last night, shining brightly through the glass, made an illuminated place upon the ground. Instinctively avoiding this, and going round it, he looked in at the window. At first, he thought that there was no one there, and that the blaze was reddening only the old beams in the ceiling and the dark walls; but peering in more narrowly, he saw the object of his search coiled asleep before it on the floor. He passed quickly to the door, opened it, and went in.

The creature lay in such a fiery heat, that, as the Chemist stooped to rouse him, it scorched his head. So soon as he was touched, the boy, not half awake, clutching his rags together with the instinct of flight upon him, half rolled and half ran into a distant corner of the room, where, heaped upon the ground, he struck his foot out to defend himself.

"Get up!" said the Chemist. "You have not forgotten me?"

"You let me alone!" returned the boy. "This is the woman's house—not yours."

The Chemist's steady eye controlled him somewhat, or inspired him with enough submission to be raised upon his feet, and looked at.

"Who washed them, and put those bandages where they were bruised and cracked?" asked the Chemist, pointing to their altered state.

"The woman did."

"And is it she who has made you cleaner in the face, too?"

"Yes, the woman."

Redlaw asked these questions to attract his eyes towards himself, and with the same intent now held him by the chin, and threw his wild hair back, though he loathed to touch him. The boy watched his eyes keenly, as if he thought it needful to his own defence, not knowing what he might do next; and Redlaw could see well that no change came over him.

"Where are they?" he inquired.

"The woman's out."

"I know she is. Where is the old man with the white hair, and his son?"

"The woman's husband, d'ye mean?" inquired the boy.

"Ay. Where are those two?"

"Out. Something's the matter, somewhere. They were fetched out in a hurry, and told me to stop here."

"Come with me," said the Chemist, "and I'll give you money."

"Come where? and how much will you give?"

"I'll give you more shillings than you ever saw, and bring you back soon. Do you know your way to where you came from?"

"You let me go," returned the boy, suddenly twisting out of his grasp. "I'm not a going to take you there. Let me be, or I'll heave some fire at you!"

He was down before it, and ready, with his savage little hand, to pluck the burning coals out.

What the Chemist had felt, in observing the effect of his charmed influence stealing over those with whom he came in contact, was not nearly equal to the cold vague terror with which he saw this baby-monster put it at defiance. It chilled his blood to look on the immovable impenetrable thing, in the likeness of a child, with its sharp malignant face turned up to his, and its almost infant hand, ready at the bars.

"Listen, boy!" he said. "You shall take me where you please, so that you take me where the people are very miserable or very wicked. I want to do them good, and not to harm them. You shall have money, as I have told you, and I will bring you back. Get up! Come quickly!" He made a hasty step towards the door, afraid of her returning.

"Will you let me walk by myself, and never hold me, nor yet touch me?" said the boy, slowly withdrawing the hand with which he threatened, and beginning to get up.

"I will!"

"And let me go before, behind, or anyways I like?"

"I will!"

"Give me some money first then, and I'll go."

The Chemist laid a few shillings, one by one, in his extended hand. To count them was beyond the boy's knowledge, but he said "one," every time, and avariciously looked at each as it was given, and at the donor. He had nowhere to put them, out of his hand, but in his mouth; and he put them there.

Redlaw then wrote with his pencil on a leaf of his pocket-book, that the boy was with him; and laying it on the table, signed to him to follow. Keeping his rags together, as usual, the boy

complied, and went out with his bare head and his naked feet into the winter night.

Preferring not to depart by the iron gate by which he had entered, where they were in danger of meeting her whom he so anxiously avoided, the Chemist led the way, through some of those passages among which the boy had lost himself, and by that portion of the building where he lived, to a small door of which he had the key. When they got into the street, he stopped to ask his guide—who instantly retreated from him—if he knew where they were.

The savage thing looked here and there, and at length, nodding his head, pointed in the direction he designed to take. Redlaw going on at once, he followed, something less suspiciously; shifting his money from his mouth into his hand, and back again into his mouth, and stealthily rubbing it bright upon his shreds of dress, as he went along.

Three times, in their progress, they were side by side. Three times they stopped, being side by side. Three times the Chemist glanced down at his face, and shuddered as it forced upon him one reflection.

The first occasion was when they were crossing an old churchyard, and Redlaw stopped among the graves, utterly at a loss how to connect them with any tender, softening, or consolatory thought.

The second was, when the breaking forth of the moon induced him to look up at the Heavens, where he saw her in her glory, surrounded by a host of stars he still knew by the names and histories which human science has appended to them; but where he saw nothing else he had been wont to see, felt nothing he had been wont to feel, in looking up there, on a bright night.

The third was when he stopped to listen to a plaintive strain of music, but could only hear a tune, made manifest to him by the dry mechanism of the instruments and his own ears, with no address to any mystery within him, without a whisper in it of the past, or of the future, powerless upon him as the sound of last year's running water, or the rushing of last year's wind.

At each of these three times, he saw with horror that, in spite of the vast intellectual distance between them, and their being unlike each other in all physical respects, the expression on the boy's face was the expression on his own.

They journeyed on for some time—now through such crowded places, that he often looked over his shoulder thinking he had lost his guide, but generally finding him within his shadow on his other side; now by ways so quiet, that he could have counted his short, quick, naked footsteps coming on behind—until they

arrived at a ruinous collection of houses, and the boy touched him and stopped.

"In there!" he said, pointing out one house where there were scattered lights in the windows, and a dim lantern in the doorway, with "Lodgings for Travellers" painted on it.

Redlaw looked about him; from the houses, to the waste piece of ground on which the houses stood, or rather did not altogether tumble down, unfenced, undrained, unlighted, and bordered by a sluggish ditch; from that, to the sloping line of arches, part of some neighbouring viaduct or bridge with which it was surrounded, and which lessened gradually, towards them, until the last but one was a mere kennel for a dog, the last a plundered little heap of bricks; from that, to the child, close to him, cowering and trembling with the cold, and limping on one little foot, while he coiled the other round his leg to warm it, yet staring at all these things with that frightful likeness of expression so apparent in his face, that Redlaw started from him.

"In there!" said the boy, pointing out the house again. "I'll wait."

"Will they let me in?" asked Redlaw.

"Say you're a doctor," he answered with a nod. "There's plenty ill here."

Looking back on his way to the house-door, Redlaw saw him trail himself upon the dust and crawl within the shelter of the smallest arch, as if he were a rat. He had no pity for the thing, but he was afraid of it; and when it looked out of its den at him, he hurried to the house as a retreat.

"Sorrow, wrong, and trouble," said the Chemist, with a painful effort at some more distinct remembrance, "at least haunt this place, darkly. He can do no harm, who brings forgetfulness of such things here!"

With these words, he pushed the yielding door, and went in.

There was a woman sitting on the stairs, either asleep or forlorn, whose head was bent down on her hands and knees. As it was not easy to pass without treading on her, and as she was perfectly regardless of his near approach, he stopped, and touched her on the shoulder. Looking up, she showed him quite a young face, but one whose bloom and promise were all swept away, as if the haggard winter should unnaturally kill the spring.

With little or no show of concern on his account, she moved nearer to the wall to leave him a wider passage.

"What are you?" said Redlaw, pausing, with his hand upon the broken stair-rail.

"What do you think I am?" she answered, showing him her face again.

He looked upon the ruined Temple of God, so lately made, so soon disfigured; and something, which was not compassion—for the springs in which a true compassion for such miseries has its rise, were dried up in his breast—but which was nearer to it, for the moment, than any feeling that had lately struggled into the darkening, but not yet wholly darkened, night of his mind—mingled a touch of softness with his next words.

"I am come here to give relief, if I can," he said. "Are you thinking of any wrong?"

She frowned at him, and then laughed; and then her laugh prolonged itself into a shivering sigh, as she dropped her head again, and hid her fingers in her hair.

"Are you thinking of a wrong?" he asked once more.

"I am thinking of my life," she said, with a momentary look at him.

He had a perception that she was one of many, and that he saw the type of thousands, when he saw her, drooping at his feet.

"What are your parents?" he demanded.

"I had a good home once. My father was a gardener, far away, in the country."

"Is he dead?"

"He's dead to me. All such things are dead to me. You a gentleman, and not know that!" She raised her eyes again, and laughed at him.

"Girl!" said Redlaw, sternly, "before this death, of all such things, was brought about, was there no wrong done to you? In spite of all that you can do, does no remembrance of wrong cleave to you? Are there not times upon times when it is misery to you?"

So little of what was womanly was left in her appearance, that now, when she burst into tears, he stood amazed. But he was more amazed, and much disquieted, to note that in her awakened recollection of this wrong, the first trace of her old humanity and frozen tenderness appeared to show itself.

He drew a little off, and in doing so, observed that her arms were black, her face cut, and her bosom bruised.

"What brutal hand has hurt you so?" he asked.

"My own. I did it myself!" she answered quickly.

"It is impossible."

"I'll swear I did! He didn't touch me. I did it to myself in passion, and threw myself down here. He wasn't near me. He never laid a hand upon me!"

In the white determination of her face, confronting him with this untruth, he saw enough of the last perversion and distortion of good surviving in that miserable breast, to be stricken with remorse that he had ever come near her.

"Sorrow, wrong, and trouble!" he muttered, turning his fearful gaze away. "All that connects her with the state from which she has fallen, has those roots! In the name of God, let me go by!"

Afraid to look at her again, afraid to touch her, afraid to think of having sundered the last thread by which she held upon the mercy of Heaven, he gathered his cloak about him, and glided swiftly up the stairs.

Opposite to him, on the landing, was a door, which stood partly open, and which, as he ascended, a man with a candle in his hand came forward from within to shut. But this man, on seeing him drew back, with much emotion in his manner, and, as if by a sudden impulse, mentioned his name aloud.

In the surprise of such a recognition there, he stopped, endeavouring to recollect the wan and startled face. He had no time to consider it, for, to his yet greater amazement, old Philip came out of the room, and took him by the hand.

"Mr. Redlaw," said the old man, "this is like you, this is like you, Sir! you have heard of it, and have come after us to render any help you can. Ah, too late, too late!"

Redlaw, with a bewildered look, submitted to be led into the room. A man lay there, on a truckle-bed, and William Swidger stood at the bedside.

"Too late!" murmured the old man, looking wistfully into the Chemist's face; and the tears stole down his cheeks.

"That's what I say, father," interposed his son in a low voice. "That's where it is, exactly. To keep as quiet as ever we can while he's a dozing, is the only thing to do. You're right, father!"

Redlaw paused at the bedside, and looked down on the figure that was stretched upon the mattress. It was that of a man, who should have been in the vigour of his life, but on whom it was not likely the sun would ever shine again. The vices of his forty or fifty years' career had so branded him, that, in comparison with their effects upon his face, the heavy hand of Time upon the old man's face who watched him had been merciful and beautifying.

"Who is this?" asked the Chemist, looking round.

"My son George, Mr. Redlaw," said the old man, wringing his hands. "My eldest son, George, who was more his mother's pride than all the rest!"

Redlaw's eyes wandered from the old man's grey head, as he laid it down upon the bed, to the person who had recognised him

and who had kept aloof, in the remotest corner of the room. He seemed to be about his own age; and although he knew no such hopeless decay and broken man as he appeared to be, there was something in the turn of his figure, as he stood with his back towards him, and now went out at the door, that made him pass his hand uneasily across his brow.

"William," he said in a gloomy whisper, "who is that man?"

"Why you see, Sir," returned Mr. William, "that's what I say, myself. Why should a man ever go and gamble, and the like of that, and let himself down inch by inch till he can't let himself down any lower!"

"Has *he* done so?" asked Redlaw, glancing after him with the same uneasy action as before.

"Just exactly that, Sir," returned William Swidger, "as I'm told. He knows a little about medicine, Sir, it seems; and having been wayfaring towards London with my unhappy brother that you see here," Mr. William passed his coat-sleeve across his eyes, "and being lodging up stairs for the night—what I say, you see, is that strange companions come together here sometimes—he looked in to attend upon him, and came for us at his request. What a mournful spectacle, Sir! But that's where it is. It's enough to kill my father!"

Redlaw looked up, at these words, and, recalling where he was and with whom, and the spell he carried with him—which his surprise had obscured—retired a little, hurriedly, debating with himself whether to shun the house that moment, or remain.

Yielding to a certain sullen doggedness, which it seemed to be a part of his condition to struggle with, he argued for remaining.

"Was it only yesterday," he said, "when I observed the memory of this old man to be a tissue of sorrow and trouble, and shall I be afraid, to-night, to shake it? Are such remembrances as I can drive away, so precious to this dying man that I need fear for *him*? No! I'll stay here."

But he stayed, in fear and trembling none the less for these words; and, shrouded in his black cloak with his face turned from them, stood away from the bedside, listening to what they said, as if he felt himself a demon in the place.

"Father!" murmured the sick man, rallying a little from his stupor.

"My boy! My son George!" said old Philip.

"You spoke, just now, of my being mother's favourite, long ago. It's a dreadful thing to think now, of long ago!"

"No, no, no;" returned the old man. "Think of it. Don't say it's dreadful. It's not dreadful to me, my son."

"It cuts you to the heart, father." For the old man's te were falling on him.

"Yes, yes," said Philip, "so it does; but it does me goo It's a heavy sorrow to think of that time, but it does me goo George. Oh, think of it too, think of it too, and your heart wi be softened more and more! Where's my son William? Willia my boy, your mother loved him dearly to the last, and with h latest breath said, 'Tell him I forgave him, blessed him, and pray for him.' Those were her words to me. I have never forgott them, and I'm eighty-seven!"

"Father!" said the man upon the bed, "I am dying, I kno I am so far gone, that I can hardly speak, even of what my mi most runs on. Is there any hope for me beyond this bed?"

"There is hope," returned the old man, "for all who softened and penitent. There is hope for all such. Oh!" exclaimed, clasping his hands and looking up, "I was thankf only yesterday, that I could remember this unhappy son when was an innocent child. But what a comfort it is, now, to thi that even God himself has that remembrance of him!"

Redlaw spread his hands upon his face, and shrank, like murderer.

"Ah!" feebly moaned the man upon the bed. "The wa since then, the waste of life since then!"

"But he was a child once," said the old man. "He play with children. Before he lay down on his bed at night, and f into his guiltless rest, he said his prayers at his poor mother's kn I have seen him do it, many a time; and seen her lay his he upon her breast, and kiss him. Sorrowful as it was to her and m to think of this, when he went so wrong, and when our hopes a plans for him were all broken, this gave him still a hold upon that nothing else could have given. Oh, Father, so much bett than the fathers upon earth! Oh, Father, so much more afflict by the errors of Thy children! take this wanderer back! Not he is, but as he was then, let him cry to Thee, as he has so oft seemed to cry to us!"

As the old man lifted up his trembling hands, the son, whom he made the supplication, laid his sinking head against hi for support and comfort, as if he were indeed the child of whom h spoke.

When did man ever tremble, as Redlaw trembled, in the silen that ensued! He knew it must come upon them, knew that was coming fast.

"My time is very short, my breath is shorter," said the sic man, supporting himself on one arm, and with the other gropin

n the air, "and I remember there is something on my mind concerning the man who was here just now. Father and William —wait!—is there really anything in black, out there?"

"Yes, yes, it is real," said his aged father.

"Is it a man?"

"What I say myself, George," interposed his brother, bending kindly over him. "It's Mr. Redlaw."

"I thought I had dreamed of him. Ask him to come here."

The Chemist, whiter than the dying man, appeared before him. Obedient to the motion of his hand, he sat upon the bed.

"It has been so ripped up, to-night, Sir," said the sick man, laying his hand upon his heart, with a look in which the mute, imploring agony of his condition was concentrated, "by the sight of my poor old father, and the thought of all the trouble I have been the cause of, and all the wrong and sorrow lying at my door, that——"

Was it the extremity to which he had come, or was it the dawning of another change, that made him stop?

"—that what I *can* do right, with my mind running on so much, so fast, I'll try to do. There was another man here. Did you see him?"

Redlaw could not reply by any word; for when he saw that fatal sign he knew so well now, of the wandering hand upon the forehead, his voice died at his lips. But he made some indication of assent.

"He is penniless, hungry, and destitute. He is completely beaten down, and has no resource at all. Look after him! Lose no time! I know he has it in his mind to kill himself."

It was working. It was on his face. His face was changing, hardening, deepening in all its shades, and losing all its sorrow.

"Don't you remember? Don't you know him?" he pursued.

He shut his face out for a moment, with the hand that again wandered over his forehead, and then it lowered on Redlaw, reckless, ruffianly, and callous.

"Why, d—n you!" he said, scowling round, "what have you been doing to me here! I have lived bold, and I mean to die bold. To the Devil with you!"

And so lay down upon his bed, and put his arms up, over his head and ears, as resolute from that time to keep out all access, and to die in his indifference.

If Redlaw had been struck by lightning, it could not have struck him from the bedside with a more tremendous shock. But the old man, who had left the bed while his son was speaking to him, now returning, avoided it quickly likewise, and with abhorrence.

"Where's my boy William?" said the old man hurriedly "William, come away from here. We'll go home."

"Home, father!" returned William. "Are you going to lea your own son?"

"Where's my own son?" replied the old man.

"Where? why, there!"

"That's no son of mine," said Philip, trembling with resentmen "No such wretch as that, has any claim on me. My children a pleasant to look at, and they wait upon me, and get my meat a drink ready, and are useful to me. I've a right to it! I eighty-seven!"

"You're old enough to be no older," muttered William, lookin at him grudgingly, with his hands in his pockets. "I don't kno what good you are, myself. We could have a deal more pleasu without you."

"*My* son, Mr. Redlaw!" said the old man. "*My* son, to The boy talking to me of *my* son! Why, what has he ever do to give me any pleasure, I should like to know?"

"I don't know what you have ever done to give *me* a pleasure," said William, sulkily.

"Let me think," said the old man. "For how many Chris mas times running, have I sat in my warm place, and never ha to come out in the cold night air; and have made good chee without being disturbed by any such uncomfortable, wretched sig as him there? Is it twenty, William?"

"Nigher forty, it seems," he muttered. "Why, when I loo at my father, Sir, and come to think of it," addressing Redla with an impatience and irritation that were quite new, "I' whipped if I can see anything in him but a calendar of ever many years of eating and drinking, and making himself comfor able, over and over again."

"I—I'm eighty-seven," said the old man, rambling childishly and weakly, "and I don't know as I ever was much r out by anything. I'm not going to begin now, because of wh he calls my son. He's not my son. I've had a power of pleasu times. I recollect once—no I don't—no, it's broken off. It w something about a game of cricket and a friend of mine, but it somehow broken off. I wonder who he was—I suppose I like him? And I wonder what became of him—I suppose he died But I don't know. And I don't care, neither; I don't care a bit.

In his drowsy chuckling, and the shaking of his head, he pu his hands into his waistcoat pockets. In one of them he found bit of holly (left there, probably last night), which he now to out, and looked at.

"Berries, eh?" said the old man. "Ah! It's a pity they're good to eat. I recollect, when I was a little chap about as h as that, and out a walking with—let me see—who was I a walking with?—no, I don't remember how that was. I 't remember as I ever walked with any one particular, or cared any one, or any one for me. Berries, eh? There's good cheer in there's berries. Well; I ought to have my share of it, and e waited on, and kept warm and comfortable; for I'm eighty-n, and a poor old man. I'm eigh-ty-seven. Eigh-ty-seven!"

The drivelling, pitiable manner in which, as he repeated this, nibbled at the leaves, and spat the morsels out; the cold, unrested eye with which his youngest son (so changed) regarded ı; the determined apathy with which his eldest son lay dened in his sin; impressed themselves no more on Redlaw's ervation,—for he broke his way from the spot to which his feet med to have been fixed, and ran out of the house.

His guide came crawling forth from his place of refuge, and s ready for him before he reached the arches.

"Back to the woman's?" he inquired.

"Back, quickly!" answered Redlaw. "Stop nowhere on way!"

For a short distance the boy went on before; but their ret was more like a flight than a walk, and it was as much as his b feet could do, to keep pace with the Chemist's rapid stric Shrinking from all who passed, shrouded in his cloak, and k ing it drawn closely about him, as though there were mo contagion in any fluttering touch of his garments, he made pause until they reached the door by which they had come He unlocked it with his key, went in, accompanied by the b and hastened through the dark passages to his own chamber.

The boy watched him as he made the door fast, and withd behind the table, when he looked round.

"Come!" he said. "Don't you touch me! You've brought me here to take my money away."

Redlaw threw some more upon the ground. He flung his h on it immediately, as if to hide it from him, lest the sight o should tempt him to reclaim it; and not until he saw him se by his lamp, with his face hidden in his hands, began furtivel pick it up. When he had done so, he crept near the fire, sitting down in a great chair before it, took from his breast s broken scraps of food, and fell to munching, and to staring at blaze, and now and then to glancing at his shillings, which kept clenched up in a bunch, in one hand.

"And this," said Redlaw, gazing on him with increased pugnance and fear, "is the only one companion I have left earth!"

How long it was before he was aroused from his contempla of this creature, whom he dreaded so—whether half-an-hour, half the night—he knew not. But the stillness of the room broken by the boy (whom he had seen listening) starting up, running towards the door.

"Here's the woman coming!" he exclaimed.

The Chemist stopped him on his way, at the moment when knocked.

"Let me go to her, will you?" said the boy.

"Not now," returned the Chemist. "Stay here. Nob must pass in or out of the room now. Who's that?"

"It's I, Sir," cried Milly. "Pray, Sir, let me in!"

"No! not for the world!" he said.

"Mr. Redlaw, Mr. Redlaw, pray, Sir, let me in."

"What is the matter?" he said, holding the boy.

"The miserable man you saw, is worse, and nothing I can

wake him from his terrible infatuation. William's father has ıed childish in a moment. William himself is changed. The :k has been too sudden for him; I cannot understand him; is not like himself. Oh, Mr. Redlaw, pray advise me, help me!"

"No! No! No!" he answered.

"Mr. Redlaw! Dear Sir! George has been muttering, in his e, about the man you saw there, who, he fears, will kill him-"

"Better he should do it, than come near me!"

"He says, in his wandering, that you know him; that he was r friend once, long ago; that he is the ruined father of a lent here—my mind misgives me, of the young gentleman who been ill. What is to be done? How is he to be followed? w is he to be saved? Mr. Redlaw, pray, oh, pray, advise me! lp me!"

All this time he held the boy, who was half-mad to pass him, let her in.

"Phantoms! Punishers of impious thoughts!" cried Redlaw, ing round in anguish, "Look upon me! From the darkness of mind, let the glimmering of contrition that I know is there, ıe up, and show my misery! In the material world, as I have ; taught, nothing can be spared; no step or atom in the ıdrous structure could be lost, without a blank being made in great universe. I know, now, that it is the same with good evil, happiness and sorrow, in the memories of men. Pity ! Relieve me!"

There was no response, but her "Help me, help me, let me " and the boy's struggling to get to her.

"Shadow of myself! Spirit of my darker hours!" cried llaw, in distraction, "Come back, and haunt me day and night, take this gift away! Or, if it must still rest with me, deprive of the dreadful power of giving it to others. Undo what I e done. Leave me benighted, but restore the day to those ım I have cursed. As I have spared this woman from the , and as I never will go forth again, but will die here, with no d to tend me, save this creature's who is proof against me,— r me!"

The only reply still was, the boy struggling to get to her, while ıeld him back; and the cry, increasing in its energy, "Help! me in. He was your friend once, how shall he be followed, shall he be saved? They are all changed, there is no one to help me, pray, pray, let me in!"

CHAPTER III.

THE GIFT REVERSED.

NIGHT was still heavy in the sky. On open plai
from hill-tops, and from the decks of solitary ships
sea, a distant low-lying line, that promised bye and b
to change to light, was visible in the dim horizo
but its promise was remote and doubtful, and t
moon was striving with the night-clouds busily.

The sh
ows up
Redlaw
mind su
ceeded th
and fast
one anoth
and obscu
its light as
night-clou
hover
between the moon and earth, and kept the latter veiled in da
ness. Fitful and uncertain as the shadows which the night-clo
cast, were their concealments from him, and imperfect revelati
to him; and, like the night-clouds still, if the clear light bro

for a moment, it was only that they might sweep over it, make the darkness deeper than before.

Without, there was a profound and solemn hush upon the ent pile of building, and its buttresses and angles made dark es of mystery upon the ground, which now seemed to retire the smooth white snow and now seemed to come out of it, as moon's path was more or less beset. Within, the Chemist's was indistinct and murky, by the light of the expiring lamp; ostly silence had succeeded to the knocking and the voice out-; nothing was audible but, now and then, a low sound among whitened ashes of the fire, as of its yielding up its last breath. re it on the ground the boy lay fast asleep. In his chair, the nist sat, as he had sat there since the calling at his door had ed—like a man turned to stone.

At such a time, the Christmas music he had heard before, began lay. He listened to it at first, as he had listened in the chyard; but presently—it playing still, and being borne to-ds him on the night air, in a low, sweet, melancholy strain—he and stood stretching his hands about him, as if there were e friend approaching within his reach, on whom his desolate h might rest, yet do no harm. As he did this, his face became fixed and wondering; a gentle trembling came upon him; and ast his eyes filled with tears, and he put his hands before them, bowed down his head.

His memory of sorrow, wrong, and trouble, had not come back im; he knew that it was not restored; he had no passing belief ope that it was. But some dumb stir within him made him ble, again, of being moved by what was hidden, afar off, in the ic. If it were only that it told him sorrowfully the value of t he had lost, he thanked Heaven for it with a fervent gratitude. As the last chord died upon his ear, he raised his head to listen ts lingering vibration. Beyond the boy, so that his sleeping re lay at his feet, the Phantom stood, immovable and silent, its eyes upon him.

Ghastly it was, as it had ever been, but not so cruel and relent-in its aspect—or he thought or hoped so, as he looked upon it, bling. It was not alone, but in its shadowy hand it held her hand.

And whose was that? Was the form that stood beside it indeed y's, or but her shade and picture? The quiet head was bent a e, as her manner was, and her eyes were looking down, as if in , on the sleeping child. A radiant light fell on her face, but not touch the Phantom; for, though close beside her, it was t and colourless as ever.

mother among all the ranks of loving mothers in this land; th is no one risen from the state of childhood, but shall be responsib in his or her degree for this enormity. There is not a count throughout the earth on which it would not bring a curse. Th is no religion upon earth that it would not deny; there is no peo upon earth it would not put to shame."

The Chemist clasped his hands, and looked, with trembling fe and pity, from the sleeping boy to the Phantom, standing abo him with its finger pointing down.

"Behold, I say," pursued the Spectre, "the perfect type what it was your choice to be. Your influence is powerless he because from this child's bosom you can banish nothing. H thoughts have been in 'terrible companionship' with yours, becau you have gone down to his unnatural level. He is the growth man's indifference; you are the growth of man's presumpti The beneficent design of Heaven is, in each case, overthrown, a from the two poles of the immaterial world you come together."

The Chemist stooped upon the ground beside the boy, and, wi the same kind of compassion for him that he now felt for himse covered him as he slept, and no longer shrank from him wi abhorrence or indifference.

Soon, now, the distant line on the horizon brightened, t darkness faded, the sun rose red and glorious, and the chimn stacks and gables of the ancient building gleamed in the clear a which turned the smoke and vapour of the city into a cloud gold. The very sundial in his shady corner, where the wind w used to spin with such un-windy constancy, shook off the fi particles of snow that had accumulated on his dull old face in t night, and looked out at the little white wreaths eddying rou and round him. Doubtless some blind groping of the morni made its way down into the forgotten crypt so cold and eart where the Norman arches were half buried in the ground, a stirred the dull sap in the lazy vegetation hanging to the wa and quickened the slow principle of life within the little world wonderful and delicate creation which existed there, with a faint knowledge that the sun was up.

The Tetterbys were up, and doing. Mr. Tetterby took do the shutters of the shop, and, strip by strip, revealed the treasu of the window to the eyes so proof against their seductions, Jerusalem Buildings. Adolphus had been out so long already, th he was halfway on to "Morning Pepper." Five small Tetterby whose ten round eyes were much inflamed by soap and frictio were in the tortures of a cool wash in the back kitchen; Mr Tetterby presiding. Johnny, who was pushed and hustled through b

let with great rapidity when Moloch chanced to be in an exacting ıme of mind (which was always the case), staggered up and down th his charge before the shop door, under greater difficulties than ual; the weight of Moloch being much increased by a complica-

ion of defences against the cold, composed of knitted worsted-ork, and forming a complete suit of chain-armour, with a head-piece nd blue gaiters.

It was a peculiarity of this baby to be always cutting teeth. Whether they never came, or whether they came and went away gain, is not in evidence; but it had certainly cut enough, on the

showing of Mrs. Tetterby, to make a handsome dental provisi for the sign of the Bull and Mouth. All sorts of objects w impressed for the rubbing of its gums, notwithstanding that always carried, dangling at its waist (which was immediately un its chin), a bone ring, large enough to have represented the ros of a young nun. Knife-handles, umbrella-tops, the heads walking-sticks selected from the stock, the fingers of the family general, but especially of Johnny, nutmeg-graters, crusts, the handl of doors, and the cool knobs on the tops of pokers, were among t commonest instruments indiscriminately applied for this bab relief. The amount of electricity that must have been rubbed o of it in a week, is not to be calculated. Still Mrs. Tetterby alw said "it was coming through, and then the child would be herself; and still it never did come through, and the child continued to somebody else.

The tempers of the little Tetterbys had sadly changed with few hours. Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby themselves were not m altered than their offspring. Usually they were an unselfish, goo natured, yielding little race, sharing short commons when happened (which was pretty often) contentedly and even generous and taking a great deal of enjoyment out of a very little mea But they were fighting now, not only for the soap and water, b even for the breakfast which was yet in perspective. The hand every little Tetterby was against the other little Tetterbys; a even Johnny's hand—the patient, much-enduring, and devot Johnny—rose against the baby! Yes, Mrs. Tetterby, going the door by mere accident, saw him viciously pick out a weak pl in the suit of armour where a slap would tell, and slap that bless child.

Mrs. Tetterby had him into the parlour by the collar, in th same flash of time, and repaid him the assault with usury there

"You brute, you murdering little boy," said Mrs. Tetterb "Had you the heart to do it?"

"Why don't her teeth come through, then," retorted Johnn in a loud rebellious voice, "instead of bothering me? How wo you like it yourself?"

"Like it, Sir!" said Mrs. Tetterby, relieving him of his d honoured load.

"Yes, like it," said Johnny. "How would you? Not at a If you was me, you'd go for a soldier. I will, too. There an't babies in the Army."

Mr. Tetterby, who had arrived upon the scene of action, rubb his chin thoughtfully, instead of correcting the rebel, and seem rather struck by this view of a military life.

"I wish I was in the Army myself, if the child's in the right," said Mrs. Tetterby, looking at her husband, "for I have no peace of my life here. I'm a slave—a Virginia slave:" some indistinct association with their weak descent on the tobacco trade perhaps suggested this aggravated expression to Mrs. Tetterby. "I never have a holiday, or any pleasure at all, from year's end to year's end! Why, Lord bless and save the child," said Mrs. Tetterby, shaking the baby with an irritability hardly suited to so pious an aspiration, "what's the matter with her now?"

Not being able to discover, and not rendering the subject much clearer by shaking it, Mrs. Tetterby put the baby away in a cradle, and, folding her arms, sat rocking it angrily with her foot.

"How you stand there, 'Dolphus," said Mrs. Tetterby to her husband. "Why don't you do something?"

"Because I don't care about doing anything," Mr. Tetterby replied.

"I am sure *I* don't," said Mrs. Tetterby.

"I'll take my oath *I* don't," said Mr. Tetterby.

A diversion arose here among Johnny and his five younger brothers, who, in preparing the family breakfast table, had fallen to skirmishing for the temporary possession of the loaf, and were buffeting one another with great heartiness; the smallest boy of all, with precocious discretion, hovering outside the knot of combatants, and harassing their legs. Into the midst of this fray, Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby both precipitated themselves with great ardour, as if such ground were the only ground on which they could now agree; and having, with no visible remains of their late soft-heartedness, laid about them without any lenity, and done much execution, resumed their former relative positions.

"You had better read your paper than do nothing at all," said Mrs. Tetterby.

"What's there to read in a paper?" returned Mr. Tetterby, with excessive discontent.

"What?" said Mrs. Tetterby. "Police."

"It's nothing to me," said Tetterby. "What do I care what people do, or are done to?"

"Suicides," suggested Mrs. Tetterby.

"No business of mine," replied her husband.

"Births, deaths, and marriages, are those nothing to you?" said Mrs. Tetterby.

"If the births were all over for good, and all to-day; and the deaths were all to begin to come off to-morrow; I don't see why it should interest me, till I thought it was a coming to my turn," grumbled Tetterby. "As to marriages, I've done it myself. I know quite enough about *them*."

To judge from the dissatisfied expression of her face and manne Mrs. Tetterby appeared to entertain the same opinions as h husband; but she opposed him, nevertheless, for the gratificati of quarrelling with him.

"Oh, you're a consistent man," said Mrs. Tetterby, "an't you You, with the screen of your own making there, made of nothi else but bits of newspapers, which you sit and read to the childr by the half-hour together!"

"Say used to, if you please," returned her husband. "Y won't find me doing so any more. I'm wiser now."

"Bah! wiser, indeed!" said Mrs. Tetterby. "Are y better?"

The question sounded some discordant note in Mr. Tetterby breast. He ruminated dejectedly, and passed his hand across a across his forehead.

"Better!" murmured Mr. Tetterby. "I don't know as any us are better, or happier either. Better, is it?"

He turned to the screen, and traced about it with his finge until he found a certain paragraph of which he was in quest.

"This used to be one of the family favourites, I recollect," s Tetterby, in a forlorn and stupid way, "and used to draw tea from the children, and make 'em good, if there was any litt bickering or discontent among 'em, next to the story of the rob redbreasts in the wood. 'Melancholy case of destitution. Yest day a small man, with a baby in his arms, and surrounded by ha a-dozen ragged little ones, of various ages between ten and tw the whole of whom were evidently in a famishing conditio appeared before the worthy magistrate, and made the followi recital: '—Ha! I don't understand it, I'm sure," said Tetterby "I don't see what it has got to do with us."

"How old and shabby he looks," said Mrs. Tetterby, watchi him. "I never saw such a change in a man. Ah! dear me, de me, dear me, it was a sacrifice!"

"What was a sacrifice?" her husband sourly inquired.

Mrs. Tetterby shook her head; and without replying in word raised a complete sea-storm about the baby, by her violent agitati of the cradle.

"If you mean your marriage was a sacrifice, my good wom ——" said her husband.

"I *do* mean it," said his wife.

"Why, then I mean to say," pursued Mr. Tetterby, as sulkil and surlily as she, "that there are two sides to that affair; a that *I* was the sacrifice; and that I wish the sacrifice hadn't be accepted."

"I wish it hadn't, Tetterby, with all my heart and soul I do assure you," said his wife. "You can't wish it more than I do, Tetterby."

"I don't know what I saw in her," muttered the newsman, "I'm sure;—certainly, if I saw anything, it's not there now. I was thinking so, last night, after supper, by the fire. She's fat, she's ageing, she won't bear comparison with most other women."

"He's common-looking, he has no air with him, he's small, he's beginning to stoop, and he's getting bald," muttered Mrs. Tetterby.

"I must have been half out of my mind when I did it," muttered Mr. Tetterby.

"My senses must have forsook me. That's the only way in which I can explain it to myself," said Mrs. Tetterby, with elaboration.

In this mood they sat down to breakfast. The little Tetterbys were not habituated to regard that meal in the light of a sedentary occupation, but discussed it as a dance or trot; rather resembling a savage ceremony, in the occasional shrill whoops, and brandishings of bread and butter, with which it was accompanied, as well as in the intricate filings off into the street and back again, and the hoppings up and down the doorsteps, which were incidental to the performance. In the present instance, the contentions between these Tetterby children for the milk-and-water jug, common to all, which stood upon the table, presented so lamentable an instance of angry passions risen very high indeed, that it was an outrage on the memory of Doctor Watts. It was not until Mr. Tetterby had driven the whole herd out at the front door, that a moment's peace was secured; and even that was broken by the discovery that Johnny had surreptitiously come back, and was at that instant choking in the jug like a ventriloquist, in his indecent and rapacious haste.

"These children will be the death of me at last!" said Mrs. Tetterby, after banishing the culprit. "And the sooner the better, I think."

"Poor people," said Mr. Tetterby, "ought not to have children at all. They give *us* no pleasure."

He was at that moment taking up the cup which Mrs. Tetterby had rudely pushed towards him, and Mrs. Tetterby was lifting her own cup to her lips, when they were both stopped, as if they were transfixed.

"Here! Mother! Father!" cried Johnny, running into the room. "Here's Mrs. William coming down the street!"

And if ever, since the world began, a young boy took a baby from a cradle with the care of an old nurse, and hushed and

soothed it tenderly, and tottered away with it cheerfully, Johnny was that boy, and Moloch was that baby, as they went on together!

Mr. Tetterby put down his cup; Mrs. Tetterby put down her cup. Mr. Tetterby rubbed his forehead; Mrs. Tetterby rubbed hers. Mr. Tetterby's face began to smooth and brighten; Mrs. Tetterby's began to smooth and brighten.

"Why, Lord forgive me," said Mr. Tetterby to himself, "what evil tempers have I been giving way to? What has been the matter here!"

"How could I ever treat him ill again, after all I said and felt last night!" sobbed Mrs. Tetterby, with her apron to her eyes.

"Am I a brute," said Mr. Tetterby, "or is there any good in me at all? Sophia! My little woman!"

"'Dolphus dear," returned his wife.

"I—I've been in a state of mind," said Mr. Tetterby, "that I can't abear to think of, Sophy."

"Oh! It's nothing to what I've been in, Dolf," cried his wife in a great burst of grief.

"My Sophia," said Mr. Tetterby, "don't take on. I never shall forgive myself. I must have nearly broke your heart, I know."

"No, Dolf, no. It was me! Me!" cried Mrs. Tetterby.

"My little woman," said her husband, "don't. You make me reproach myself dreadful, when you show such a noble spirit. Sophia, my dear, you don't know what I thought. I showed it bad enough, no doubt; but what I thought, my little woman!"—

"Oh, dear Dolf, don't! Don't!" cried his wife.

"Sophia," said Mr. Tetterby, "I must reveal it. I couldn't rest in my conscience unless I mentioned it. My little woman——"

"Mrs. William's very nearly here!" screamed Johnny at the door.

"My little woman, I wondered how," gasped Mr. Tetterby, supporting himself by his chair, "I wondered how I had ever admired you—I forgot the precious children you have brought about me, and thought you didn't look as slim as I could wish. I—I never gave a recollection," said Mr. Tetterby, with several self-accusation, "to the cares you've had as my wife, and along of me and mine, when you might have had hardly any with another man, who got on better and was luckier than me (anybody might have found such a man easily I am sure); and I quarrelled with you for having aged a little in the rough years you have lightened for me. Can you believe it, my little woman? I hardly can myself."

Mrs. Tetterby, in a whirlwind of laughing and crying, caught face within her hands, and held it there.

"Oh, Dolf!" she cried. "I am so happy that you thought so; n so grateful that you thought so! For I thought that you e common-looking, Dolf; and so you are, my dear, and may you he commonest of all sights in my eyes, till you close them with r own good hands. I thought that you were small; and so are, and I'll make much of you because you are, and more of

because I love my husband. I thought that you began to p; and so you do, and you shall lean on me, and I'll do all I to keep you up. I thought there was no air about you; but e is, and it's the air of home, and that's the purest and the there is, and GOD bless home once more, and all belonging to Dolf!"

"Hurrah! Here's Mrs. William!" cried Johnny.

So she was, and all the children with her; and as she came in, kissed her, and kissed one another, and kissed the baby, and

kissed their father and mother, and then ran back and flocked a
danced about her, trooping on with her in triumph.

Mr. and Mrs. Tetterby were not a bit behindhand in t
warmth of their reception. They were as much attracted to h
as the children were; they ran towards her, kissed her han
pressed round her, could not receive her ardently or enthusiastica
enough. She came among them like the spirit of all goodn
affection, gentle consideration, love, and domesticity.

"What! are *you* all so glad to see me, too, this bright Chri
mas morning?" said Milly, clapping her hands in a pleas
wonder. "Oh dear, how delightful this is!"

More shouting from the children, more kissing, more troopi
round her, more happiness, more love, more joy, more honour,
all sides, than she could bear.

"Oh dear!" said Milly, "what delicious tears you make
shed. How can I ever have deserved this! What have I don
be so loved?"

"Who can help it!" cried Mr. Tetterby.

"Who can help it!" cried Mrs. Tetterby.

"Who can help it!" echoed the children, in a joyful cho
And they danced and trooped about her again, and clung to h
and laid their rosy faces against her dress, and kissed and fond
it, and could not fondle it, or her, enough.

"I never was so moved," said Milly, drying her eyes, "a
have been this morning. I must tell you, as soon as I can spe
—Mr. Redlaw came to me at sunrise, and with a tenderness in
manner, more as if I had been his darling daughter than myse
implored me to go with him to where William's brother George
lying ill. We went together, and all the way along he was
kind, and so subdued, and seemed to put such trust and hope
me, that I could not help crying with pleasure. When we got
the house, we met a woman at the door (somebody had bruised
hurt her, I am afraid) who caught me by the hand, and blessed
as I passed."

"She was right!" said Mr. Tetterby. Mrs. Tetterby said
was right. All the children cried out that she was right.

"Ah, but there's more than that," said Milly. "When we
up stairs, into the room, the sick man who had lain for hours in
state from which no effort could rouse him, rose up in his bed, a
bursting into tears, stretched out his arms to me, and said that
had led a mis-spent life, but that he was truly repentant now,
his sorrow for the past, which was all as plain to him as a gre
prospect, from which a dense black cloud had cleared away, a
that he entreated me to ask his poor old father for his pardon a

his blessing, and to say a prayer beside his bed. And when I did so, Mr. Redlaw joined in it so fervently, and then so thanked and thanked me, and thanked Heaven, that my heart quite overflowed, and I could have done nothing but sob and cry, if the sick man had not begged me to sit down by him,—which made me quiet of course. As I sat there, he held my hand in his until he sank in a doze; and even then, when I withdrew my hand to leave him to come here (which Mr. Redlaw was very earnest indeed in wishing me to do), his hand felt for mine, so that some one else was obliged to take my place and make believe to give him my hand back. Oh dear, oh dear," said Milly, sobbing. "How thankful and how happy I should feel, and do feel, for all this!"

While she was speaking, Redlaw had come in, and, after pausing for a moment to observe the group of which she was the centre, had silently ascended the stairs. Upon those stairs he now appeared again; remaining there, while the young student passed him, and came running down.

"Kind nurse, gentlest, best of creatures," he said, falling on his knee to her, and catching at her hand, "forgive my cruel ingratitude!"

"Oh dear, oh dear!" cried Milly innocently, "here's another of them! Oh dear, here's somebody else who likes me. What shall I ever do!"

The guileless, simple way in which she said it, and in which she put her hands before her eyes and wept for very happiness, was as touching as it was delightful.

"I was not myself," he said. "I don't know what it was—it was some consequence of my disorder perhaps—I was mad. But I am so no longer. Almost as I speak, I am restored. I heard the children crying out your name, and the shade passed from me at the very sound of it. Oh don't weep! Dear Milly, if you could read my heart, and only knew with what affection and what grateful homage it is glowing, you would not let me see you weep. It is such deep reproach."

"No, no," said Milly, "it's not that. It's not indeed. It's joy. It's wonder that you should think it necessary to ask me to forgive so little, and yet it's pleasure that you do."

"And will you come again? and will you finish the little curtain?"

"No," said Milly, drying her eyes, and shaking her head. "You won't care for *my* needlework now."

"Is it forgiving me, to say that?"

She beckoned him aside, and whispered in his ear.

"There is news from your home, Mr. Edmund."

"News? How?"

"Either your not writing when you were very ill, or the cha in your handwriting when you began to be better, created so suspicion of the truth; however that is——but you're sure yo not be the worse for any news, if it's not bad news?"

"Sure."

"Then there's some one come!" said Milly.

"My mother?" asked the student, glancing round involuntar towards Redlaw, who had come down from the stairs.

"Hush! No," said Milly.

"It can be no one else."

"Indeed?" said Milly, "are you sure?"

"It is not——." Before he could say more, she put her ha upon his mouth.

"Yes it is!" said Milly. "The young lady (she is very l the miniature, Mr. Edmund, but she is prettier) was too unha to rest without satisfying her doubts, and came up, last night, w a little servant-maid. As you always dated your letters from college, she came there; and before I saw Mr. Redlaw this morni I saw her. *She* likes me too!" said Milly. "Oh dear, th another!"

"This morning! Where is she now?"

"Why, she is now," said Milly, advancing her lips to his e "in my little parlour in the Lodge, and waiting to see you."

He pressed her hand, and was darting off, but she detained hi

"Mr. Redlaw is much altered, and has told me this morni that his memory is impaired. Be very considerate to him, l Edmund; he needs that from us all."

The young man assured her, by a look, that her caution w not ill-bestowed; and as he passed the Chemist on his way o bent respectfully and with an obvious interest before him.

Redlaw returned the salutation courteously and even humb and looked after him as he passed on. He drooped his head up his hand too, as trying to reawaken something he had lost. B it was gone.

The abiding change that had come upon him since the influe of the music, and the Phantom's reappearance, was, that now truly felt how much he had lost, and could compassionate his o condition, and contrast it, clearly, with the natural state of th who were around him. In this, an interest in those who w around him was revived, and a meek, submissive sense of l calamity was bred, resembling that which sometimes obtains age, when its mental powers are weakened, without insensibility sullenness being added to the list of its infirmities.

He was conscious that, as he redeemed, through Milly, more nd more of the evil he had done, and as he was more and more vith her, this change ripened itself within him. Therefore, and ecause of the attachment she inspired him with (but without ther hope), he felt that he was quite dependent on her, and that he was his staff in his affliction.

So, when she asked him whether they should go home now, to vhere the old man and her husband were, and he readily replied 'yes"—being anxious in that regard—he put his arm through ers, and walked beside her; not as if he were the wise and learned nan to whom the wonders of Nature were an open book, and hers vere the uninstructed mind, but as if their two positions were eversed, and he knew nothing, and she all.

He saw the children throng about her, and caress her, as he and he went away together thus, out of the house; he heard the ring- ng of their laughter, and their merry voices; he saw their bright aces, clustering around him like flowers; he witnessed the renewed ontentment and affection of their parents; he breathed the simple ir of their poor home, restored to its tranquillity; he thought of he unwholesome blight he had shed upon it, and might, but for er, have been diffusing then; and perhaps it is no wonder that he valked submissively beside her, and drew her gentle bosom nearer o his own.

When they arrived at the Lodge, the old man was sitting in is chair in the chimney-corner, with his eyes fixed on the ground, nd his son was leaning against the opposite side of the fire-place, ooking at him. As she came in at the door, both started, and urned round towards her, and a radiant change came upon their faces.

"Oh dear, dear, dear, they are all pleased to see me like the est!" cried Milly, clapping her hands in an ecstasy, and stopping hort. "Here are two more!"

Pleased to see her! Pleasure was no word for it. She ran nto her husband's arms, thrown wide open to receive her, and he vould have been glad to have her there, with her head lying on his houlder, through the short winter's day. But the old man ouldn't spare her. He had arms for her too, and he locked her in hem.

"Why, where has my quiet Mouse been all this time?" said he old man. "She has been a long while away. I find that it's mpossible for me to get on without Mouse. I—where's my son William?—I fancy I have been dreaming, William."

"That's what I say myself, father," returned his son. "*I* have een in an ugly sort of dream, I think.—How are you, father? re you pretty well?"

"Strong and brave, my boy," returned the old man.

It was quite a sight to see Mr. William shaking hands with h father, and patting him on the back, and rubbing him gently dow with his hand, as if he could not possibly do enough to show interest in him.

"What a wonderful man you are, father!—How are yo father? Are you really pretty hearty, though?" said Willia shaking hands with him again, and patting him again, and rubbi him gently down again.

"I never was fresher or stouter in my life, my boy."

"What a wonderful man you are, father! But that's exac where it is," said Mr. William, with enthusiasm. "When I thi of all that my father's gone through, and all the chances a changes, and sorrows and troubles, that have happened to him the course of his long life, and under which his head has gro grey, and years upon years have gathered on it, I feel as if couldn't do enough to honour the old gentleman, and make his age easy.—How are you, father? Are you really pretty w though?"

Mr. William might never have left off repeating this inquiry, a shaking hands with him again, and patting him again, and rubbi him down again, if the old man had not espied the Chemist, wh until now he had not seen.

"I ask your pardon, Mr. Redlaw," said Philip, "but did know you were here, Sir, or should have made less free. It remi me, Mr. Redlaw, seeing you here on a Christmas morning, of time when you was a student yourself, and worked so hard that was backwards and forwards in our Library even at Christmas ti Ha! ha! I'm old enough to remember that; and I remembe right well, I do, though I'm eighty-seven. It was after you here that my poor wife died. You remember my poor wife, Redlaw?"

The Chemist answered yes.

"Yes," said the old man. "She was a dear creetur. recollect you come here one Christmas morning with a young l —I ask your pardon, Mr. Redlaw, but I think it was a sister was very much attached to?"

The Chemist looked at him, and shook his head. "I ha sister," he said vacantly. He knew no more.

"One Christmas morning," pursued the old man, "that come here with her—and it began to snow, and my wife invi the young lady to walk in, and sit by the fire that is alway burning on Christmas Day in what used to be, before our poor gentlemen commuted, our great Dinner Hall. I was the

and I recollect, as I was stirring up the blaze for the young lady to warm her pretty feet by, she read the scroll out loud, that is underneath that picter. 'Lord, keep my memory green!' She and my poor wife fell a talking about it; and it's a strange thing to think of, now, that they both said (both being so unlike to die) that it was a good prayer, and that it was one they would put up very earnestly, if they were called away young, with reference to those who were dearest to them. 'My brother,' says the young lady—'My husband,' says my poor wife.—'Lord, keep his memory of me, green, and do not let me be forgotten!'"

Tears more painful, and more bitter than he had ever shed in all his life, coursed down Redlaw's face. Philip, fully occupied in recalling his story, had not observed him until now, nor Milly's anxiety that he should not proceed.

"Philip!" said Redlaw, laying his hand upon his arm, "I am a stricken man, on whom the hand of Providence has fallen heavily, although deservedly. You speak to me, my friend, of what I cannot follow; my memory is gone."

"Merciful Power!" cried the old man.

"I have lost my memory of sorrow, wrong, and trouble," said the Chemist, "and with that I have lost all man would remember!"

To see old Philip's pity for him, to see him wheel his own great chair for him to rest in, and look down upon him with a solemn sense of his bereavement, was to know, in some degree, how precious to old age such recollections are.

The boy came running in, and ran to Milly.

"Here's the man," he said, "in the other room. I don't want him."

"What man does he mean?" asked Mr. William.

"Hush!" said Milly.

Obedient to a sign from her, he and his old father softly withdrew. As they went out, unnoticed, Redlaw beckoned to the boy to come to him.

"I like the woman best," he answered, holding to her skirts.

"You are right," said Redlaw, with a faint smile. "But you needn't fear to come to me. I am gentler than I was. Of all the world, to you, poor child!"

The boy still held back at first, but yielding little by little to her urging, he consented to approach, and even to sit down at his feet. As Redlaw laid his hand upon the shoulder of the child, looking on him with compassion and a fellow-feeling, he put out the other hand to Milly. She stooped down on that side of him, that she could look into his face, and after silence, said:

"Mr. Redlaw, may I speak to you?"

"Yes," he answered, fixing his eyes upon her. "Your voice and music are the same to me."

"May I ask you something?"

"What you will."

"Do you remember what I said, when I knocked at your door last night? About one who was your friend once, and who stood on the verge of destruction?"

"Yes. I remember," he said, with some hesitation.

"Do you understand it?"

He smoothed the boy's hair—looking at her fixedly the while and shook his head.

"This person," said Milly, in her clear, soft voice, which her mild eyes, looking at him, made clearer and softer, "I found soon afterwards. I went back to the house, and, with Heaven's help, traced him. I was not too soon. A very little and I should have been too late."

He took his hand from the boy, and laying it on the back of the hand of hers, whose timid and yet earnest touch addressed him no less appealingly than her voice and eyes, looked more intently on her.

"He *is* the father of Mr. Edmund, the young gentleman we saw just now. His real name is Longford.—You recollect the name?"

"I recollect the name."

"And the man?"

"No, not the man. Did he ever wrong me?"

"Yes!"

"Ah! Then it's hopeless—hopeless."

He shook his head, and softly beat upon the hand he held, as though mutely asking her commiseration.

"I did not go to Mr. Edmund last night," said Milly,—"You will listen to me just the same as if you did remember all?"

"To every syllable you say."

"Both, because I did not know, then, that this really was his father, and because I was fearful of the effect of such intelligence upon him, after his illness, if it should be. Since I have known who this person is, I have not gone either; but that is for another reason. He has long been separated from his wife and son—has been a stranger to his home almost from this son's infancy, I learn from him—and has abandoned and deserted what he should have held most dear. In all that time he has been falling from the state of a gentleman, more and more, until——" she rose and hastily, and going out for a moment, returned, accompanied by the wreck that Redlaw had beheld last night.

"Do you know me?" asked the Chemist.

"I should be glad," returned the other, "and that is an unwonted word for me to use, if I could answer no."

The Chemist looked at the man, standing in self-abasement and degradation before him, and would have looked longer, in an ineffectual struggle for enlightenment, but that Milly resumed her late position by his side, and attracted his attentive gaze to her own face.

"See how low he is sunk, how lost he is!" she whispered, stretching out her arm towards him, without looking from the Chemist's face. "If you could remember all that is connected with him, do you not think it would move your pity to reflect that one you ever loved (do not let us mind how long ago, or in what belief that he has forfeited), should come to this?"

"I hope it would," he answered. "I believe it would."

His eyes wandered to the figure standing near the door, but came back speedily to her, on whom he gazed intently, as if he strove to learn some lesson from every tone of her voice, and every beam of her eyes.

"I have no learning, and you have much," said Milly; "I am not used to think, and you are always thinking. May I tell you why it seems to me a good thing for us, to remember wrong that has been done us?"

"Yes."

"That we may forgive it."

"Pardon me, great Heaven!" said Redlaw, lifting up his eyes, "for having thrown away thine own high attribute!"

"And if," said Milly, "if your memory should one day be restored, as we will hope and pray it may be, would it not be a blessing to you to recall at once a wrong and its forgiveness?"

He looked at the figure by the door, and fastened his attentive eyes on her again; a ray of clearer light appeared to him to shine into his mind, from her bright face.

"He cannot go to his abandoned home. He does not seek to go there. He knows that he could only carry shame and trouble to those he has so cruelly neglected; and that the best reparation he can make them now, is to avoid them. A very little money carefully bestowed, would remove him to some distant place, where he might live and do no wrong, and make such atonement as is left within his power for the wrong he has done. To the unfortunate lady who is his wife, and to his son, this would be the best and kindest boon that their best friend could give them—one too that they need never know of; and to him, shattered in reputation, mind, and body, it might be salvation."

He took her head between his hands, and kissed it, and said: "It shall be done. I trust to you to do it for me, now and secretly; and to tell him that I would forgive him, if I were so happy as to know for what."

As she rose, and turned her beaming face towards the fallen man, implying that her mediation had been successful, he advanced a step, and without raising his eyes, addressed himself to Redlaw.

"You are so generous," he said, "—you ever were—that you will try to banish your rising sense of retribution in the spectacle that is before you. I do not try to banish it from myself, Redlaw. If you can, believe me."

The Chemist entreated Milly, by a gesture, to come nearer to him; and, as he listened, looked in her face, as if to find in it the clue to what he heard.

"I am too decayed a wretch to make professions; I recollect my own career too well, to array any such before you. But from the day on which I made my first step downward, in dealing falsely by you, I have gone down with a certain, steady, doomed progression. That, I say."

Redlaw, keeping her close at his side, turned his face towards the speaker, and there was sorrow in it. Something like mournful recognition too.

"I might have been another man, my life might have been another life, if I had avoided that first fatal step. I don't know that it would have been. I claim nothing for the possibility. Your sister is at rest, and better than she could have been with me, if I had continued even what you thought me: even what I once supposed myself to be."

Redlaw made a hasty motion with his hand, as if he would have put that subject on one side.

"I speak," the other went on, "like a man taken from the grave. I should have made my own grave, last night, had it not been for this blessed hand."

"Oh dear, he likes me too!" sobbed Milly, under her breath. "That's another!"

"I could not have put myself in your way, last night, even for bread. But, to-day, my recollection of what has been is so strongly stirred, and is presented to me, I don't know how, so vividly, that I have dared to come at her suggestion, and to take your bounty, and to thank you for it, and to beg you, Redlaw, in your dying hour, to be as merciful to me in your thoughts, as you are in your deeds."

He turned towards the door, and stopped a moment on his way forth.

"I hope my son may interest you, for his mother's sake. I hope he may deserve to do so. Unless my life should be preserved a long time, and I should know that I have not misused your aid, I shall never look upon him more."

Going out, he raised his eyes to Redlaw for the first time. Redlaw, whose steadfast gaze was fixed upon him, dreamily held out his hand. He returned and touched it—little more—with both his own; and bending down his head, went slowly out.

In the few moments that elapsed, while Milly silently took him to the gate, the Chemist dropped into his chair, and covered his face with his hands. Seeing him thus, when she came back, accompanied by her husband and his father (who were both greatly concerned for him), she avoided disturbing him, or permitting him to be disturbed; and kneeled down near the chair to put some warm clothing on the boy.

"That's exactly where it is. That's what I always say, father!" exclaimed her admiring husband. "There's a motherly feeling in Mrs. William's breast that must and will have went!"

"Ay, ay," said the old man; "you're right. My son William's right!"

"It happens all for the best, Milly dear, no doubt," said Mr. William, tenderly, "that we have no children of our own; and yet I sometimes wish you had one to love and cherish. Our little dead child that you built such hopes upon, and that never breathed the breath of life—it has made you quiet-like, Milly."

"I am very happy in the recollection of it, William dear," she answered. "I think of it every day."

"I was afraid you thought of it a good deal."

"Don't say, afraid; it is a comfort to me; it speaks to me in so many ways. The innocent thing that never lived on earth, is like an angel to me, William."

"You are like an angel to father and me," said Mr. William, softly. "I know that."

"When I think of all those hopes I built upon it, and the many times I sat and pictured to myself the little smiling face upon my bosom that never lay there, and the sweet eyes turned up to mine that never opened to the light," said Milly, "I can feel a greater tenderness, I think, for all the disappointed hopes in which there is no harm. When I see a beautiful child in its fond mother's arms, I love it all the better, thinking that my child might have been like that, and might have made my heart as proud and happy."

Redlaw raised his head, and looked towards her.

"All through life, it seems by me," she continued, "to tell me something. For poor neglected children, my little child pleads as if it were alive, and had a voice I knew, with which to speak to me. When I hear of youth in suffering or shame, I think that my child might have come to that, perhaps, and that God took it

from me in his mercy. Even in age and grey hair, such as father's, it is present: saying that it too might have lived to be old, long and long after you and I were gone, and to have needed the respect and love of younger people."

Her quiet voice was quieter than ever, as she took her husband's arm, and laid her head against it.

"Children love me so, that sometimes I half fancy—it's a silly fancy, William—they have some way I don't know of, of feeling for my little child, and me, and understanding why their love is precious to me. If I have been quiet since, I have been more happy, William, in a hundred ways. Not least happy, dear, in this—that even when my little child was born and dead but a few days, and I was weak and sorrowful, and could not help grieving a little, the thought arose, that if I tried to lead a good life, I should meet in Heaven a bright creature, who would call me, Mother!"

Redlaw fell upon his knees, with a loud cry.

"O Thou," he said, "who through the teaching of pure love, hast graciously restored me to the memory which was the memory of Christ upon the Cross, and of all the good who perished in His cause, receive my thanks, and bless her!"

Then, he folded her to his heart; and Milly, sobbing more than ever, cried, as she laughed, "He is come back to himself! He likes me very much indeed, too! Oh, dear, dear, dear me, here's another!"

Then, the student entered, leading by the hand a lovely girl, who was afraid to come. And Redlaw so changed towards him, seeing in him and his youthful choice, the softened shadow of that chastening passage in his own life, to which, as to a shady tree, the dove so long imprisoned in his solitary ark might fly for rest and company, fell upon his neck, entreating them to be his children.

Then, as Christmas is a time in which, of all times in the year, the memory of every remediable sorrow, wrong, and trouble in the world around us, should be active with us, not less than our own experiences, for all good, he laid his hand upon the boy, and, silently calling Him to witness who laid His hand on children in old time, rebuking, in the majesty of His prophetic knowledge, those who kept them from Him, vowed to protect him, teach him, and reclaim him.

Then, he gave his right hand cheerily to Philip, and said that they would that day hold a Christmas dinner in what used to be, before the ten poor gentlemen commuted, their great Dinner Hall; and that they would bid to it as many of that Swidger family, who, his son had told him, were so numerous that they might join

hands and make a ring round England, as could be brought together on so short a notice.

And it was that day done. There were so many Swidgers there, grown up and children, that an attempt to state them in round numbers might engender doubts, in the distrustful, of the veracity of this history. Therefore the attempt shall not be made. But there they were, by dozens and scores—and there was good news and good hope there, ready for them, of George, who had been visited again by his father and brother, and by Milly, and again left in a quiet sleep. There, present at the dinner, too, were the Tetterbys, including young Adolphus, who arrived in his prismatic comforter, in good time for the beef. Johnny and the baby were too late, of course, and came in all on one side, the one exhausted, the other in a supposed state of double-tooth; but that was customary, and not alarming.

It was sad to see the child who had no name or lineage watching the other children as they played, not knowing how to talk with them, or sport with them, and more strange to the way of childhood than a rough dog. It was sad, though in a different way, to see what an instinctive knowledge the youngest children there, had of his being different from all the rest, and how they made timid approaches to him with soft words and touches, and with little presents, that he might not be unhappy. But he kept by Milly, and began to love her—that was another, as she said!—and, as they all liked her dearly, they were glad of that, and when they saw him peeping at them from behind her chair, they were pleased that he was so close to it.

All this, the Chemist, sitting with the student and his bride that was to be, and Philip, and the rest, saw.

Some people have said since, that he only thought what has been herein set down; others, that he read it in the fire, one winter night about the twilight time; others, that the Ghost was but the representation of his gloomy thoughts, and Milly the embodiment of his better wisdom. *I* say nothing.

—Except this. That as they were assembled in the old Hall, by no other light than that of a great fire (having dined early), the shadows once more stole out of their hiding-places, and danced about the room, showing the children marvellous shapes and faces on the walls, and gradually changing what was real and familiar there, to what was wild and magical. But that there was one thing in the Hall, to which the eyes of Redlaw, and of Milly and her husband, and of the old man, and of the student, and his bride that was to be, were often turned, which the shadows did not obscure or change. Deepened in its gravity by the firelight, and

gazing from the darkness of the panelled wall like life, the sedate face in the portrait, with the beard and ruff, looked down at them from under its verdant wreath of holly, as they looked up at it; and, clear and plain below, as if a voice had uttered them, were the words,

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